

THE PROMISE OF LAND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT
A Theological-Ethical Study of its Nature, Conditions, and Purpose

LAIU FACHHAI



Thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree Master of Theology at the University of Stellenbosch

Supervisor: Prof. HL Bosman

2001

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

Signature

Date

ABSTRACT

This research is a study of the promise of land in the Old Testament. Special emphasis is given to what theological-ethical implications the nature, conditions, and purpose of the promise of land entail – what it meant to the Israelites and what it means to us today. The scope of this thesis is the Old Testament in its final form (here the 39 books of the Protestant Bible). However, the study is mainly based on the narratives and prophetic literature, as the promise of land is mostly found in these texts. A careful study of the natures of the four land covenant texts of Genesis 15 and 17 (Abrahamic covenant), Exodus 19-24 (Sinaitic covenant; cf. Dt 5:6-18; 12-16), 2 Samuel 7:5-29 (Davidic covenant), and Jeremiah 31:31-34 (new covenant) will show that Yahweh's promise (gift) of land to Abraham and his descendants (the Israelites) in the Old Testament is conditional. Possession and continual possession of the promised land will depend on the Israelites' observance of the stipulations of the land covenants. In order to possess and continually possess the land, the Israelites must worship Yahweh exclusively, live a holy life, pursue righteous and justice, share the land equally among themselves, and care for the land according to the will of the giver. Failure to observe these stipulations will result in losing the land (exile). Israel failed and was exiled. But that was not the end. The promise of land is also the promise of restoration (to the land) if the Israelites return to the Lord. Return, they did, and were restored to the promised land. All these conditions apply (some of them analogously or/and metaphorically) to us today as we live on this planet earth, God's creation-gift. The purpose of the promise of land is for blessing – both material blessing of wellbeing and spiritual blessing of knowing and worshipping Yahweh God. This blessing is for both the Israelites and the whole world. By promising a land to the Israelites, God wants to use the promised land and its people as a standard measure for other lands and nations. In this way, the promise of land is not so much a privilege as it is a responsibility. On the one hand, the promise of land gives the Israelites, for that matter, other peoples as well, a spatial-ethnic identity, which entails the need to respect every people's ethnic identity and their "God-given" land. On the other, the promised land is not exclusively for the Israelites, it is a place where other peoples (aliens) may also live (Eze 47:21-23). This inevitably challenges us to strive towards a peaceful coexistence and sharing of resources including land regardless of color, creed, and language. The promised land, for that matter, the whole earth, is God's collective gift to the whole humanity. Therefore every human has a right to the land. The earth, God's creation-gift, if shared and managed according to the will of the giver, is enough to provide a home to everyone and meet his or her needs.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsing bestudeer die landbelofte in die Ou Testament. Spesiale klem word gelê op die teologies-etiese implikasies ten opsigte van die aard, voorwaardes en doel van die belofte – en die betekenis daarvan vir die Israeliete en vir ons vandag. Die bestek van hierdie tesis is die finale vorm van die Ou Testament (hier die 39 boeke van die Protestantse Bybel), maar die fokus val op die verhalende en profetiese literatuur, waarin die landsbelofte meeste aangetref word. Noukeurige analise van die aard van die vier land-verbond tekste van Genesis 15 en 17 (Abraham-verbond), Eksodus 19-24 (Sinaï-verbond; vgl. Deut 5:6-18; 12-16), 2 Samuel 7:5-29 (Dawid-verbond), en Jeremia 31:31-34 (nuwe verbond) toon dat Jahwe se belofte (gawe) van land aan Abraham en sy nakomelinge (die Israeliete) in die Ou Testament voorwaardelik is. Die huidige en toekomstige besit van die beloofde land vereis dat die Israeliete die voorskrifte van die landverbond nakom. Om die land te kan eien en die eienaarskap daarvan voort te sit, moet die Israeliete Jahwe uitsluitlik aanbid, 'n gewyde lewe voer, reg en geregtigheid nastreef, die land eweredig met mekaar deel en omsien daarna ooreenkomstig die wil van die gewer. Om te faal in die nakom van hierdie opdragte sal veroorsaak dat die land weerhou word (eksiel). Israel het misluk, en is in ballingskap gevoer. Dit was egter nie die finale woord nie. Die belofte van land impliseer ook die belofte van herstel (restorasie van die land) indien die Israeliete hulle tot die Here sou terugkeer. Dit het hulle gedoen, en die beloofde land is aan hulle terugbesorg. Hierdie voorskrifte geld ook vandag vir ons (sommige wel analogies en/of metafores) waar ons die planeet aarde, God se skeppingsgawe, bewoon. Die doel van die landsbelofte is seën, beide as materiële welvaart en geestelike seën in die ken en aanbied van Jahwe God. Hierdie seën geld vir die Israeliete soos ook vir die ganse wêreld. Deur land te beloof aan die Israeliete, bepaal God dat dit gebruik moet kan word vir alle inwoners as 'n standaardmaatstaf ook vir ander lande en nasies. Op die manier is die beloofde land nie slegs 'n voorreg nie maar ook 'n verantwoordelikheid. Enersyds bied die beloofde land aan die Israeliete, soos ook vir ander mense, 'n ruimtelike etniese identiteit, wat meebring dat alle etniese identiteite en hulle "Godgegewe" grond respek verdien. Andersyds geld die landsbelofte nie uitsluitlik vir die Israeliete nie, dit is 'n ruimte waar ook ander mense (vreemdelinge) mag woon (Eze 47:21-23). Dit stel onvermydelik aan ons 'n uitdaging tot vreedsame naasbestaan en verdeling van hulpbronne insluitend grond, benewens verskille in kleur, godsdiens en taal. Die beloofde land, trouens die hele aarde, is God se kollektiewe gawe aan die hele mensdom. Daarom is elke persoon geregtig op land. Die aarde, God se skeppings gawe, is toereikend om vir elkeen 'n tuiste te verskaf en aan sy of haar behoeftes te voldoen, mits dit gedeel en bestuur word volgens die wil van die gewer.

CONTENTS

Chapters

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1.	Problem	1
1.2.	Hypothesis	2
1.3.	Terminology and textual survey	3
1.3.1.	Land	3
1.3.2.	Land as God's promise, and the promised land as Israel's inheritance and possession	5
1.3.3.	Exile and return	8
1.4.	Approach	9
2.	HISTORY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PROMISE OF LAND	16
2.1.	Introduction	16
2.2.	From 1880's to 1970's	16
2.3.	From 1970's onward	17
2.3.1.	Walter Brueggemann	19
2.3.2.	Suzzane Boorer	25
2.3.3.	Moshe Weinfeld	30
2.4.	Concluding remarks	43
3.	THE NATURE OF THE PROMISE OF LAND: Conditional or Unconditional	45
3.1.	Introduction	45
3.2.	Covenant in the Ancient Near East	46
3.3.	Nature of the Old Testament land covenants	47
3.3.1.	Abrahamic Covenant	47
3.3.2.	Sinaitic Covenant	52
3.3.3.	Davidic Covenant	56
3.3.4.	New Covenant	57
3.4.	Concluding remarks	61

4.	THE CONDITIONS OF THE PROMISE OF LAND	64
4.1.	Introduction	64
4.2.	Exclusive worship of Yahweh	64
4.3.	Holiness	67
4.3.1.	Dishonoring parents defiles the Holy Land	69
4.3.2.	Shedding of blood defiles the Holy Land	70
4.3.3.	Adultery and other sexual perversions defile the Holy Land	72
4.3.4.	Stealing, false accusation and covetousness defile the Holy Land	73
4.4.	Righteousness and justice	76
4.5.	Land sharing and land caring	82
4.5.1.	Land sharing	82
4.5.1.1.	Arguments from Yahweh's ownership of the land	82
4.5.1.2.	Arguments from rules of land distribution and land holding	85
4.5.1.3.	Arguments from rules of land redemption and the Year of Jubilee	89
4.5.1.4.	Argument from the fact of universal brotherhood	92
4.5.2.	Land caring	93
4.5.2.1.	Argument from creation-gift obligations	93
4.5.2.2.	Argument from rules of fallow years	94
4.6.	Concluding remarks	94
5.	THE PURPOSE OF THE PROMISE OF LAND	96
5.1.	Introduction	96
5.2.	The promise of land is for blessing:	
	A textual study of Genesis 12:1-3; Ex 3:8; 4:23; 5:1	97
5.2.1.	For personal blessing: to be landed, prosper, and become a great nation and worshipper of Yahweh	98
5.2.2.	To be a blessing to others	105
5.2.2.1.	To the immediate context	105
5.2.2.2.	To the entire world	106
5.3.	Why was Canaan chosen to be the promised land?	106
5.4.	Concluding remarks	112
6.	CONCLUSION:	
	Possible implications for modern ethical decision-making	113

Appendices

1	Distribution of land promise texts among the Deuteronomistic and Priestly theological traditions	119
2	Recent development of the Dalit movement in India	120
3	The promised land according to the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants that was attained during David's reign	121

Tables

1	Occurrences and distributions of ארץ and אדמה the Old Testament	4
2	Distribution of land promise texts	7
3	Primary land oath texts	26
4	Similarities between the ANE land treaties and the OT land covenants	62
5	Similarities between the Holiness Code, Book of the Covenant, and Deuteronomy	67

Bibliography	122
---------------------	-----

ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ANE	Ancient Near East
ANET	Ancient Near East Texts
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BDB	Brown-Driver-Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CEDT	Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology
EDB	Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible
ET	English Translation
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs

HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
IVP	Inter-Varsity Press
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JANES	Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JPS	The Jewish Publication Society
JSOT	Journal of the Society of the Old Testament
LXX	Septuagint
NAC	New American Commentary
NE	Near East
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDOTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis
NBD	New Bible Dictionary
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
PEQ	Palestine Exploration Quarterly
RB	Revue Biblique
RHPbR	Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses
SBL	Society for Biblical Literature
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TLOT	Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
TWAT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum alten Testament
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

Abbreviations for the biblical books follow that of the NIV.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, my wife and I thank the Almighty God for his provision, protection, and presence during our study times at Stellenbosch. Due to the limited time we can afford to stay in Stellenbosch, most of the time we were under pressure. It is by the continual strength and enabling from the Lord through the prayers of many that I am able to complete my studies. Praise, glory, and honor to his holy name!

My special thanks are due to my supervisor Professor Hendrik L Bosman, Professor of the Old Testament and Chair of the Departments of the Old & New Testaments of the Theology faculty at the University of Stellenbosch, who, without rejecting my evangelical position, helped me to study the texts in depth. It is a great privilege to study under him. His friendliness, humor, and ever willingness to help are highly appreciated.

I am also thankful to Professor H Russel Botman, Professor of Missiology at the University of Stellenbosch, under whom I did my missiological studies, for his guidance and selection of useful literatures – some of which are cited in this thesis.

My thanks are also due to Mrs Leeta Kellerman, Mrs Susanne Botha, and Mrs Annemarie Eagleton of the Theology library of the University of Stellenbosch, without whose services my library researches would not have been easy; Mrs Felicity Grove, the department secretary, and senior researchers, Jan P Bosman, Werner Lategan, and Jenny Thompson of the Old Testament department, who provided me with valuable assistance; Mark Koopman, who helped me a lot in photocopying techniques; Mrs Jenny Fortein and Mrs Annilize Februarie of the Theology faculty cafeteria for their Christian friendship and help; the staff of the International office of the university for all their help in housing arrangements and other international student related matters; and the University of Stellenbosch, especially the Theology faculty, for giving me the opportunity to study at this university.

My heartfelt thanks, more than words can express, go to my wife, Debbie, for shouldering the burden of household chores cheerfully and lovingly even though she herself was a full time student, too.

We are also thankful to our mission SIM (Serving in Mission) for giving us financial support and an extended furlough time for our studies. Our thanks are also due to Rev Andrea Simeon and Kereja Kristen church members in Jakarta, Indonesia; Rev Chan Fong and members of the

Singapore Grace Chinese Christian Church; brothers and sisters at the Grace Bethesda Church in Singapore; Rev David Chu and the Friendship Presbyterian churches in Taipei; the Indian Evangelical Mission; the Evangelical Church of Maraland in Mizoram, India; and family and friends, without whose financial support and prayers our studies at Stellenbosch would not have been possible. We also received a bursary surprise from the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa for which we are so grateful.

While we were in Stellenbosch, we attended St Paul's Church. We are grateful to the pastor, Rev Lee Marshall, and members, especially George Lord's weekly Bible study group, for warmly welcoming us, encouraging us and praying for us. We are also grateful to our SIM colleagues in the Western Cape, especially, Jurie and Maggie Goosen and their three children, Christo, Tim, and Phillip, who helped us in many ways during our stay in South Africa. Our thanks are also due to the prayers and encouragement of our prayer fellowship group that meet on Friday evenings at our apartment and all others who have helped us in one way or the other to make our studies and stay at Stellenbosch possible.

To uncle

Laisa Hlychho

For a loving home

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1. PROBLEM

Land promise is a central theme for many of the Old Testament books, especially the narratives and prophetic literature. It permeates almost every level of these books. As important as the subject is, its interpretation and application are difficult and sensitive tasks. This thesis will, as the topic would suggest, basically ask three theological-ethical questions facing the Old Testament studies, and for that matter, the church and the world, today on the *nature, conditions, and purpose* of the promise of land.

There have been scholarly debates on these three aspects of the promise of land. Some argue for the unconditional nature of the promise while others would argue for its conditionality. We will analyze this first problem – whether the promise of land in the Old Testament is unconditional or conditional – in the light of its contemporary ANE land covenants. Opinions are also divided on the dating and motif of the promise.

Whatever interpretation one adopts – either conditional or unconditional or both, no one can deny the fact that there are indeed stipulations (Decalogue and other laws) spelled out in land covenants made between God and the Israelites. However, opinions are divided again as to the interpretation of these stipulations. Those who advocate the conditionality of the promise would argue that they were binding conditions for possession and continual possession of the land while advocates of the unconditional promise take them as instructions for godly life in the promised land, in the same way salvation in the New Testament does not depend on one's good work. For those who subscribe neither of the opinions, these stipulations mean little more than ideal norms of life for a utopian community, as it is practically impossible to observe them all. As for possession or continual possession of the land by the Israelites, they would argue that it was just a matter of the survival of the fittest. Thus the second problem will discuss the specific stipulations of the covenant. Were they binding? Are these stipulations of the promise of land relevant and binding for Christians and the world today?

Discussions on this problem will then lead us to the third question – what then is the chief end of the promise of land and observance of its stipulations? Related to this question of the purpose of

the promise of land are questions such as: Does the promise of land entail a spatial-ethnological awareness, and if so, how should one respond to such awareness? Why was Canaan chosen to be the promised land in the first place? Is God partial, a land giver to one (Israelites) and a depriver of it to the other (Canaanites¹), who even ordered the annihilation of them?

1.2. HYPOTHESIS

Having illustrated the problems, the following are the hypotheses of this thesis. The earth is God's creation and as the creator he is the ultimate owner of it. God gives the earth to humankind on the condition that they will use and take care of it according to his will. As the creator-owner, he alone has the right to give the land and take it back if his conditions are not met. He takes back the land of Canaan because of the sins of the people (Amorites) and gives it to Abraham and his descendants to be their inheritance. However, Israel does not own the land. Inheritance here is basically a right to land holding, as God remains the ultimate owner of the land (Lev 25:23). In giving the land of Canaan to the Israelites to be their inheritance, God, the divine sovereign, enters into a covenantal agreement with them in the form of the contemporary ANE land treaties. This gives Israel both a divine right and a legal title to possess the land of Canaan. A closer and careful study of the covenantal land promise texts of the Old Testament in the light of the ANE land treaties (covenants) will reveal that the promise of land to the Israelites is conditional.

As a conditional gift, to possess and continually possess the promised land will depend on the Israelites' observance of the covenant stipulations that are expressed in the legal instructions, holiness codes, narrative lessons, prophetic oracles, and wisdom sayings of the Old Testament.² They must exclusively worship Yahweh, live a holy life, practice righteousness and justice, share the land equally among themselves and use and take care of it according to the will of the giver. Failure to observe these stipulations will result in losing the land, as was the case with the Canaanites before them. In this way, land becomes not an end in itself, but a means to an end.

The promise of land promises blessings of wellbeing, posterity, and name if its conditions are met – blessings both for Abraham and his descendants themselves and all peoples who shall be blessed through them. God purposes the promised land and its people to serve as a standard to

¹ "Canaanites" is a generic term for the pre-Israelite inhabitants of the promised land.

² By "Old Testament," I mean the 39 books of the Protestant Old Testament or Hebrew Bible. I am aware of the presence of land texts in the *deutero*-canonical books as well as the New Testament. The scope of this research is limited within the 39 books mentioned above.

other lands and nations. However, though its theological-ethical teachings may be literally, analogously, and metaphorically applied depending on its relevance, the possession of the land of Canaan itself was a once for all event which borders might not be expanded by the Israelites and which promise may not be literally claimed by other adherents of the Old Testament. The promised land provides the Israelites with a root of existence and a place of honor and dignity. Land provides the same to different ethnic groups today. Communities and individuals, therefore, must not be forcefully removed from their lands; neither shall an ethnic group be separated forcefully by dividing their land. This spatial-ethnological awareness, which is particularly the case with ethnic groups where honor and shame culture is prevalent, is an important component of identity that is often neglected.

At the same time, as the world, whether one likes it or not, is moving towards a global village resulting in different ethnic groups working and living together, humans must strive for a peaceful coexistence and sharing of resources including land, no matter whether it is in “our land,” “your land,” or “their land.” God wills land to everyone, and the earth, his gift, if shared and managed according to his will, is sufficient to provide a home to everyone and meet his or her needs.

1.3. TERMINOLOGY AND TEXTUAL SURVEY

A short definition and textual survey on the following terms in relation to the promise of land will help us catch the meaning and nuances of the promise motif better.

1.3.1. Land (ארץ and אדמה)

ארץ and אדמה are the two common Hebrew words for “land” in the Old Testament. The noun ארץ (earth) consistently appears as a feminine; a reminder of the concept of “mother” earth in contrast and/or relation to a masculine “father” שמים (heaven) in the ancient Semitic worldview. When used together, שמים וארץ (heaven and earth) is a common expression for “world” (Ge 1:1; 2:1, 4; 14:19, 22, etc). ארץ is usually translated ‘land’ when it refers to (a) a specific geographical region (eg, “land of Ararat,” 2 Ki 19:37), or (b) the territory of a specific people (eg, “land of the Kenites,” Ge 15:19); and it is translated ‘earth,’ as mentioned above, when it refers to the realm of human habitation (world). אדמה, literally meaning “to be red” (thus red earth, red field in its Semitic root אדם), on the other hand, is not frequently used for a

geographical or political entity, it is mostly used to refer to a cultivated land, ground, field, soil; many times connected with fertility and blessing (Ge 9:20; 47:20-24; Zec 13:5), a (land) property (Nu 35:2; 1 Ki 21:3; Ruth 4:3), and a place for dwelling (Ge 6:1,7; Nu 12:3).³

According to Rost, ארץ and אדמה are seldom synonyms, but Plöger (Schmid also supports his view) offers a few exceptions (Dt. 4:38, 40; 11:8f.; 12:1; 26:2, 15).⁴ A closer look at the אדמה texts, however, will show that ארץ and אדמה are, in some cases, interchangeably used, especially when it refers to a located area. אדמה is used for a geographical location in quite a few cases (eg, Ge 28:15; Lev 20:24; Nu 11:12; Dt 5:16). The following table will show their occurrences and distributions in the Old Testament.

Table 1: Occurrences and distributions of ארץ and אדמה in the Old Testament⁵

Land	Old Testament	Torah (Pentateuch) (Ge-Dt)	Former Prophets (Historical Books) (Jos-Est)	Later Prophets (Isa-Mal)	Writings	
					Psalms	Wisdom literature (Job, Pr, Ecc, SS)
ארץ	2504	849	539	833	190	93
אדמה	231	100	34	87	6	4

Following the literary category of the Old Testament, we see the maximum occurrence of ארץ and אדמה in the narratives (Torah and Former Prophets or Historical Writings) and Isaiah-Jeremiah-Ezekiel of the prophetic literature. This shows how integral a part land played in Israel's history. The number of its occurrences in Psalms and the wisdom literature is also remarkable. ארץ is the fourth most frequent noun in the Old Testament after יהוה (the Lord, 6827 times), אלהים (God 2601 times), and ישראל (Israel, 2515 times). If we combine ארץ and אדמה, the combined occurrence of them would be more than that of ישראל. This clearly shows how central a place land occupies in the Old Testament alongside the Lord God (יהוה אלהים) and Israel (ישראל). If one of them was taken away, the Old Testament would not be the Old Testament.

³ Cf. B L Bandstra, "Land," *ISBE* Vol 3 (1986), 71-72; Christopher J H Wright, ארץ, *NIDOTE* Vol 1 (1997), 518-524; Michael A Grisanti, אדמה, *NIDOTE* Vol 1 (1997), 269-275; W Janzen, "Land," *ABD* Vol 4 (1992), 143-150; M Ottosson, ארץ, *TDOT* Vol 1 (1974) 388-406; J G Plöger, אדמה, *TDOT* Vol 1 (1974), 88-98; H H Schmid, אדמה and ארץ, *TLOT* Vol 1 (1997), 172-179; *BDB* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research System, Inc., 1998).

⁴ L Rost, "Die Bezeichnungen für Land und Volk im Alten Testament," in *Das klein Credo und Andere Studien zum Alten Testamen* (Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer, 1965), 76-101; J G Plöger, *Literarkritische, formgeschichtliche und stilkritische Untersuchungen zum Deuteronomium*, (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1967), 128-129; H H Schmid, אדמה and ארץ, 172-179, (as assessed in S Boorer, *The Promise of Land as Oath: A Key to the Formation of Pentateuch* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992], 114, n 216; and Janzen, "Land," 144).

⁵ Figures are according to the Logos concordance search from the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia - Morphologically Tagged Edition* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research System, Inc., 1998).

1.3.2. Land as God's promise (אמר, דבר, שבע, נתן, בוא) and the promised land as Israel's inheritance and possession (נחלה, אחזה, ירש)

There is no direct corresponding technical term in the Hebrew language for the word “promise” though the English designation, “promised land,” correctly expresses the Old Testament concept on the subject. Most English Bibles translate the *Gal* of אמר (say; Ge 21:1; 2 Ki 8:19 // 2 Ch 21:7; 1 Ch 27:23; Ps 119:57; Est 4:7) and *Piel* of דבר (speak; Jos 23:14; 2 Ch 6:10; Jer 29:10) as promises when their contexts lead to the promise concepts. For the promise concept of land, אמר and דבר are, however, less frequently used compared with שבע, נתן, and בוא. *Niphal* of שבע (נשבע) (swear); *Gal* of נתן (give); and *Hiphil* of בוא על (bring, go up, enter into the land) are the most frequently used verbs to convey the idea of land as a promise. שבע (נשבע) is in fact the closest term to the promise concept. The “sworn land” would, therefore, be a better rendering than the “promised land.” Nevertheless, since the “promised land” is a common rendering, this thesis, too, will employ this term. The term “land” will be used, in some cases, both for the “promised land” and land in general. The context will tell which one it is referring to.

The promised land is also described as the נחלה (inheritance) of the Israelites. Its nominal term is derived from its verbal root נחל (inherit or divide inheritance) (1 Ki 21:3f.; Dt 4:38; 12:9; 15:4). נחלה conveys the concept of land transferred to the Israelites by God as a personal bond between him and Israel (Nu 26:52-56; Jos 11:23; 13:7-8; Eze 48:29). This gives an inalienable right to Israel to retain it. However, the ultimate inheritance or ownership of the land remains with God (Lev 25:23; cf. Jos 22:19; Ps 24:1; 39:13-ET 39:12; 119:19; 1 Sa 26:19; Jer 2:7; 16:8), as is with the case with Israel herself as his people (Dt 4:20; 32:8f.). Thus Israel does not have the right of sale, including individual inheritances (1 Ki 21:3f.; Jos 4:9; Ru 4:5, 10); only God has the authority to dispose of land belonging to him.

If נחלה represents a legal aspect of land transfer, אחזה (possession) is the praxis of it. Its verbal root אחז – meaning seize, grasp, take hold, take possession - suggests that the land, which Israel possesses now, did not originally belong to them. By way of God's gift only does it become their possession (Lev 14:34; Dt 32:49). So, like נחלה, אחזה conveys a notion that the promised land cannot be sold (Lev 25:10f.; 27:22-24).

נחלה and אחזה are functionally related and are used together in several cases, but they are not synonyms. נחלה's relation to אחזה is expressed in terms of ארץ אחוזתם (land of your possession or your land; Jos 22:19), אחזה נחלה (a possession of inheritance or possession by right of

inheritance, Nu 27:6; cf. Jos 13:29; Eze 44:28; 46:18), נחלת אחוזתם (inheritance of their possession; Nu 35:2), and אחוזת נחלתנו (the possession of our inheritance; Nu 32:32).⁶

The promise of the possession of the land of Canaan to the sojourning Abraham and his descendants is a central theme in the Pentateuch.

ירש is a verb most frequently used to convey the concept of the promised land as both an inheritance and possession for the Israelites. The *Gal* of ירש (take possession of, especially by force; dispossess, inherit) is translated either 'inherit' or 'possess' according to its context, more often as 'possess.' When נחל and ירש are used together, נחל is sometimes translated as possess and ירש as inherit (eg, Isa 57:13, King James Version).

The following table, following the literary tradition of the Old Testament, will show the distribution of the land promise texts. References in the table are not exhaustive, neither are they listed here for analysis of them all; the purpose of the table is to give us a picture of how the land promise theme is prevalent in almost all the Old Testament books. In some cases, two or three of these promissory words occur together in a verse or a passage. At any rate, there are nearly three hundred land promise texts in the Old Testament (ארץ, 250+ and ארמה, 20+). The highest occurrences, as the table illustrates, are found in the narratives. In the prophetic literature, they are found mostly in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

⁶ Every Israelite family should get an inheritance except the Levites whose inheritance shall be in terms of tithes (Nu 18:21-26; 26:62), certain cities (Nu 35:2; Jos 14:4), a share in the sacrifices (Jos 13:14; Dt 18:1f.), and God in his

Table 2: Distribution of land promise texts

<i>Promise</i>	<i>Torah</i>	<i>Former Prophets</i>	<i>Later Prophets</i>	<i>Writings (Psalms)</i>
אמור Promise	Nu 14:40	Ne 9:23		
דבר Promise	Ex 12:25; Dt 6:3; 9:28; 12:20; 19:8; 27:3	Jos 22:4; 23:5; 23:10; 23:15; 1 Ki 8:56	Jer 32:42-43; 33:14	
שבע Swear	Ge 22:6, 16; 24:7; 26:3; 50:24-25; Ex 13:5, 11; 32:13; 33:1; Nu 11:12; 14:16, 21-23; 32:11; Dt 1:8, 35; 6:10, 18, 23; 7:13; 8:1; 10:11; 11:9, 21; 19:8; 26:3; 28:11; 30:20; 34:4	Jos 1:6; 5:6; 21:43; Jdg 2:1	Jer 11:5; 32:22	
נתן Give	Ge 12:6-7 cf. 12:1; 13:14-17; 15:7-8, 17:8; 18; 24:6-7; 26:2-3; 28:4, 13; 35:12-15; 48:3-5; Ex 6:4-8; 12:25; 13:5, 11; 32:13; 20:12; 33:1; Lev 14:34; 20:24; 23:10; 25:2, 38; 26:4-6; Nu 13:1; 14:8; 15:2; 16:14; 20:12, 24; 27:12; 32:5-9, 33; 33:53; 34:13; 36:2; Dt 1:8, 25, 35; 2:12, 24, 29-31; 3:12-13, 18-20; 4:1, 38; 5:15, 31; 6:10, 23; 7:13; 8:10; 9:6, 23; 10:11; 11:9, 17, 21, 31; 12:1, 10; 15:4-7; 16:20; 17:14; 18:9; 19:1-3; 8-10, 14; 21:1, 23; 24:4; 25:15, 19; 26:1-2; 27:2-3; 28:8-12; 25:19; 26:9-10, 15; 28:52; 29:8; 30:20; 31:7, 23; 32:49-52; 34:4	Jos 1:2, 6, 10, 13-15; 2:9, 14; 5:6; 8:1; 9:24; 11:23; 18:3; 19:49; 21:41-43; 22:4; 23:13, 15-16; 24:3, 8, 13; 1 Ki 8:36; 9:7; 14:15; 2 Ki 21:8; 1 Ch 6:55; 16:18; 22:17; 2 Ch 6:27, 36-39; 7:14, 20; 14:6-7; Ne 9:7-8, 15, 34-37	Jer 3:18-19; 7:7; 11:5; 16:15; 17:4; 24:10; 25:5; 30:3; 32:22; 35:15; Eze 11:15-17; 20:15, 28, 42; 28:25; 33:23; 37:25; 45:8; 47:14; Am 9:15	Ps 105:8-11, 42-45; 135:8-12; 136:16-20
על, בוא Bring	Ge 15:7; 28:15; 48:21; 50:24; Ex 3:8, 17; Ex 6:8; 12:17; 13:5, 11; 16:3; 33:1; Lev 18:3; 20:22; 25:38; Nu 13:27; 14:3, 8, 16, 24, 31; 15:18; 16:13-14; 20:22; 32:5, 17; Dt 1:8; 4:1, 38; 6:10, 18, 23; 7:1; 8:1; 9:4, 28; 11:29; 26:2, 9; 28:63; 29:27; 30:5; 31:20-23	Jos 1:11; 24:8; Jdg 2:1; 1 Ki 8:34; 2 Ch 6:25	Isa 14:1; Jer 2:6-7; 12:15; 16:14-15; 23:7-8; 24:6; 30:3; 32:2, 22; Eze 20:6, 15, 28, 42; 34:13, 36:24; 37:12, 21; 38:8; 40:2; Am 2:10; Zec 10:10	Ps 85:1
נחלה Inheritance	Ge 28:4; Ex 23:30; 32:13; Lev 20:24; Nu 16:14; 26:52-55; 32:32; 33:54; 34:1-2, 13, 18, 29; 36:2; Dt 3:28; 4:21, 38; 12:10; 15:4; 19:3, 10, 14; 21:23; 24:4; 25:19; 26:1; 29:8; 31:7	Jos 1:6; 11:23; 13:7; 14:1, 9; 17:6; 18:4; 19:49; Jdg 2:6; 1 Ki 8:36; 1 Ch 16:18; 28:8; 2 Ch 6:27; Ezra 9:11-12	Isa 57:13; 65:9; Jer 3:18; 12:14; 16:18; Eze 33:23-24; 45:1; 47:13-14; 48:29; Zec 2:16 (ET 2:12)	Ps 37:11, 22, 29, 34; 105:11; 136:16-22
אחזה Possession	Ge 17:8; 48:4; 49:30; 50:13; Lev 14:34; 25:10, 24; 27:24; Nu 32:5, 22, 29-32; 35:28; Dt 2:12; 3:20; 32:49	Jos 1:15; 22:4, 9, 19	Eze 11:15; 36:5; 45:8	Ps 44:3
ירש Possess	Ge 15:7; Lev 20:24; Nu 14:24; 33:53; Dt 1:8, 21; 2:24, 31; 3:18-20; 4:1, 5, 14, 22, 26; 5:31, 33; 6:1, 18; 7:1; 8:1; 9:4-6, 23; 10:11; 11:8, 10-11, 29, 31; 12:1, 29; 15:4; 16:20; 17:14; 19:2, 14; 21:1; 23:20; 25:19; 28:21, 63; 30:5, 16, 18; 31:13; 32:47	Jos 1:10; 18:3; 23:5; 24:8; Jdg 2:6; 18:9; 1 Ch 28:8; Ezr 9:11; Ne 9:15, 23	Isa 14:2; 41:2; 57:13; 60:21; 61:7, 21; Jer 30:3; Am 2:10; Eze 33:25-26; Hab 1:6	Ps 37:29, 34

For the distribution of land promise texts among the three theological traditions of the Old Testament - Deuteronomic History, Priestly Writing, and Wisdom Literature - see appendix 1.

There are other words that are alluded to the promise idea. For example, אָבַר (go over the Jordan into the land, eg, Nu 32:5; 21:29; 33:50; 35:9; Dt 2:29; 3:25-27; 4:21-26; 9:1; 11:31; 12:10; 27:2-4; 30:18; 31:2, 13; 32:47; Jos 1:2, 11; 3:1, 11-17; 4:1-23; 5:1; 7:7; 24:4; Jdg 10:9), חָלַק (divide the land; eg, Jos 13:7; 18:10; 19:51; cf. Eze 47:21; Ps 60:6; 108:7), and יָשַׁב (dwell in the land; eg, Ge 13:17; Eze 12:2; Jos 20:6; Jdg 1:33; 1 Ki 13:11).⁷ יָצָא מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם (bring/brought out of Egypt/the land of Egypt, mentioned 125 times) is another strong allusion to the promise of land, as Yahweh's purpose in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt was to take them to the promised land. The promised land is also described as מְנוּחָה (rest), a nominal derivation from its verbal root נָחַ (give rest). This rest, the hope of Israel's wilderness wandering, was realized with the crossing of the Jordan and the occupation of Canaan (Dt 12:9f.; 25:19; cf. 3:20). There are also several references to the promise of land concept that do not use these words or words listed in the table (for example, 2 Ch 7:14; Pr 2:21-22; 10:30; Isa 62:4; Joel 2:8).

1.3.3. Exile and return (גֹּלָה and שׁוּב)

The terms, especially גֹּלָה and שׁוּב, need some mention as they are mostly used in connection with Israel's exile from and return to the promised land. גֹּלָה is the most common term for exile (eg, Am 1:5; 5:5; 7:11-17; Hos 10:5 alluding to 1 Sa 4:21-22; Jer 5:9, 29; 9:9; 25:12; 29:10; Eze 39:23; 2 Ki 15:29; 17:6, 23; 24:14; 25:11). Its simple meaning is 'to uncover' (eg, Pr 20:19; Est 3:14; Nu 24:42; Ps 119:18; Da 2:22). It also means to depart, go away. For example, in 1 Sa 4:21-22, the expression גֹּלָה כְּבוֹד (the glory has departed) describes the capture of the Ark of the Covenant. The same is true of the exile (2 Ki 17:6, 23) – the promised land (and the people) is uncovered, the glory has departed (Mic 1:16; Est 2:6; Zec 6:10; Isa 45:13; Jer 25:5).⁸

שׁוּב (return) is the term specifically employed by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel for the return of the Israelites from their exile in Babylon to the promised land. Interestingly, in many instances, שׁוּב is promised in the same text immediately after the announcement of the exile (Jer 16:13, 15; cf. 12:11-15 and 24:1-10; 31:16; cf. Eze 11:17; 20:34, 41-42; 34:13; 36:24; 37:21; 39:27-28; also Dt 30:1-6; Ne 1:8; and Isa 14:1-2). There are at least three motivations for the return to the land: Yahweh is compassionate and will deal favorably with his people by restoring them to the land of Israel (cf. Jer 29:10-11; 31:16, 20); God acts to return his people because his

⁷ Cf. W Janzen, "Land," 144; Jerome A Lund, אָבַר, *NIDOTE* Vol 1 (1997), 443-449; Michael A Grisanti, בּוֹא, *NIDOTE* Vol 1 (1997), 615-618; Frank R Ames, דָּבַר, *NIDOTE* Vol 2 (1997), 912-915; Cornelis Van Dam, חָלַק, *NIDOTE* Vol 2 (1997) 161-163; Gerald H Wilson, יָשַׁב, *NIDOTE* Vol 2 (1997), 550-551; Eugene Carpenter, יָרַשׁ, *NIDOTE* Vol 2 (1997), 549-550; Suzanne Boorer, *The Promise of the Land as Oath*, passim, for שָׁבַע with שָׁבַע and נָחַ: For discussion on promise, see also W Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1997), 164-173.

⁸ Cf. Allen P Ross, "Exile," *NIDOTE* Vol 4 (1997), 595-601.

reputation is at stake (Eze 36:22-24); and return to the land represents a return to the place of blessing (Jer 31:10-14).⁹

Other terms used to express the concept of exile are הָגָה (separate, remove, drive away), נָדַח (drive out or banish), שָׁבַח (take captive, be taken captive, Ex 12:29; Dt 28:41; Ps 126:1), and *Hiphil* of בָּרַח (drive away, injure).

1.4. APPROACH

Recognizing the authority that the Old Testament has commanded for more than two thousand years over millions of believers, in this thesis, I will employ a synchronic approach (ie, studying a text based on its final form) to the Old Testament, as the purpose of this study is theological-ethical. However, in the same vein as Childs,¹⁰ I will also consult the historical-critical¹¹ method or a diachronic textual analysis wherever it will give a better understanding of the text.

A theological-ethical interpretation of the Old Testament is basically an approach that takes the claim of the text in its final form seriously, as it believes that the text is a record of Israel's encounter and relationship with God.¹² For a theological-ethical approach, the purpose of the Old Testament is not so much to do history, literature, or sociology, as it is to theology and ethics. By "not to do history, literature, or sociology," the theological-ethical approach does not

⁹ Cf. A Thompson/Elmer A Marten, שֵׁב, *NIDOTE* Vol 4 (1997), 58.

¹⁰ Brevard S Childs, *Exodus: A Commentary*, OTL (London: SCM, 1974), 502, considers that one of the major purposes of tracing the history of a text's development is to be able better to interpret the present form of the text.

¹¹ The historical-critical method is an approach that analyzes the history of biblical texts with the aim of situating the developmental stages of a text prior to its canonized final form. The nineteenth-century Old Testament scholarship was largely dominated by this method. Gabler, representing scholars of this age, identified the task of the Old Testament interpretation as historical (cf. John H Sandys-Wunsch and Laurence Eldredge, "J.P. Gabler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality," *SJT* 33 [1880], 133-58, assessed in Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1997], 13). Under the rubric of the historical criticism are literary criticism, form criticism (closely related to this is tradition-historical criticism), and redaction criticism. For further discussion, see Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1997), 6-15; Walter C Kaiser, Jr, *Towards Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 64-75, passim; J Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Methods in Biblical Study* (London: Longman & Todd, 1996); J L Mays, D L Peterson, & K H Richards, eds., *Old Testament Interpretation: Past Present and Future* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995); Steven L McKenzie & M Patrick Graham, eds., *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1998).

¹² Although the historical-critical method has a lot to contribute towards the study of the Old Testament, using its method alone is not adequate. In response to this, with the publication of Karl Barth's, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968, first published in 1919), the twentieth century witnessed a recovery of a theological-ethical interpretation of the Old Testament. Recent studies on the subject, which I find convincing, include Kaiser, *Towards Rediscovering the Old Testament*; Brevard S Child, *Biblical Theology in the Old and New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); and Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*. For the analysis of other works on the subject, for example, Alt, Noth, Eichrodt, von Rad, Childs, Barr, Gottwald, Muilenburg, Phyllis Trible, Clines, Levenson, Rendtorff, Albright, Wright, Bright, Mosala, etc., see Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 15-114.

hypothesize that the Old Testament records are not history; neither does it say that the Old Testament has anything to do with literature or sociology.¹³ It is a stand one takes by asserting that the Old Testament texts are not purely history, literature, or sociology in the sense of our understanding of these disciplines today. Historically speaking, the Old Testament is a theological history; in terms of literature, it is a theological literature; and in sociological aspect, it is a theological sociology.¹⁴ The Old Testament narratives do contain history. However, they are not to be taken as historical records per se, they are theological stories in history. In response to my sometimes over demanded bed time stories, my grandmother used to say, “Don’t always say, story, story, don’t you know that we too will one day become a story.”¹⁵ In other words, she was basically saying that our history would become a story for others one day.

When this thesis refers to a text as a literature, it basically means a type of literature the Bible employs. To compare it with the theological motif of a text, literature plays a subordinate role only. In other words, the Bible is not written for the purpose of literature. Literature does not create the Bible; the Bible uses literature. Therefore, I shall be very careful not to dissect the Bible into minute pieces of tradition and literature. To do so, as Nahum Sarna¹⁶ warns, will miss the coherent message of the Scripture. The Old Testament no doubt gives us valuable sociological information about the ancient Israelites. But again, the sociology of the ancient Israelites can be best understood only if it is studied against the backdrop of its theological history of monotheistic belief in Yahweh.

This study is not a survey of land or theology of land per se. It is an attempt to understand the nature, conditions, and purpose of the promise of land in the Old Testament and the theological-ethical demands and values it entails.¹⁷ Theology and ethics are two sides of the same coin in the Old Testament.¹⁸ So the phrase “theological-ethical” is used here instead of “theological and ethical” or “theology and ethics.” However, in some cases “theological-ethical” and “theology” or “ethics” will be used interchangeably. Although this is research on “land promise,” I will not

¹³ Cf. Bruce C Birch, et al, *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999); Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*; Kaiser, *Towards Rediscovering the Old Testament*; Brevard S Child, *Biblical Theology in the Old and New Testament*.

¹⁴ Canonical, structural, rhetorical, socio-rhetorical and reader-response (text-immanent) approaches come to operate, in a broader sense, under the umbrella of a theological-ethical approach (see Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Methods in Biblical Study*; Mays, Peterson & Richards [eds], *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present and Future*).

¹⁵ My grandmother’s words connote that she did not want to become a story or be talked about. Many Mara stories had sad endings. That could be the reason she believed to become a story was an unfortunate thing. See also, John Durham, *Exodus*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1987), xx, xxv.

¹⁶ Nahum Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), xviii.

¹⁷ B C Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991), 7, laments that many American Christians do not see any ethical relevance of the Old Testament for Christians today. That is not the case with many Asian and African Christians who take the theological-ethical teaching of the Old Testament seriously.

¹⁸ From Professor H L Bosman’s discussion on the topic of this thesis, January, 2001.

attempt to undertake an extensive research on the literary and theological meanings and nuances of the theme “promise,” as it is beyond the space and scope of this research.

A brief introduction to three theological traditions of the Old Testament is also necessary, as certain texts will require to be analyzed against the backdrop of its tradition. In studying the Old Testament theologically, scholars have come to notice the presence of three distinct theological traditions. According to their nature and emphases, they are distinguished as the *Deuteronomistic theology* or Deuteronomistic history (hereafter DH), *priestly theology* or priestly writing (hereafter P), and *wisdom theology* or wisdom literature respectively. The combination and compilation of these three traditions were believed to have resulted in what we call the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament today.¹⁹ Based on Jeremiah 18:18²⁰ and Ezekiel 7:26²¹ scholars have convincingly associated these three traditions with three religious and intellectual leadership groups in the ancient Israel - the sages, priests, and prophets. From the sages or counselors came the wisdom literature, from the prophets the Deuteronomistic history, and from the priests came the priestly writing. The “Wisdom (חכמה) Literature”²² of the Old Testament is quite identifiable.

¹⁹ Some would argue that the historical-critical method is used for determining these three theological traditions. To some degree that is true. No method is completely independent; all methods are intertwined and we must employ all available methods wherever necessary if we want to understand the Old Testament better.

²⁰ They said, “Come, let’s make plans against Jeremiah; for the *teaching of the law by the priests* will not be lost, nor will the *counsel from the wise*, nor the *word from the prophets*” (emphasis mine).

²¹ “Calamity upon calamity will come, and rumour upon rumour. They will try to get a *vision from the prophet*; the *teaching of the law by the priest* will be lost, as will the *counsel of the elders*” (emphasis mine) (cf. 1 Sa 28:6; Am 8:11-12; Mic 3:6-7).

²² Wisdom was not a unique Israelite tradition. Both the ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia cherished long and glorious wisdom traditions. Based on striking similarities between the Israelite wisdom literature with that of the Egyptians and Mesopotamians (for example, compare the ANET 428, “Withhold not thy son from the rod, else thou will not be able to save [him from wickedness] with Proverbs 13:24), scholars have come to the point that “Israel, like many other smaller nations in the Near East, was influenced by the international intellectual currents that moved freely from the Nile to the Tigris rivers” (Lawrence Boadt, “Wisdom, Wisdom Literature,” *EDB* [2000], 1380-1381). Israel’s sages, then, incorporated some of these Egyptian and Mesopotamian Wisdom into their own understanding of the monotheistic God. Scholars also feel a Hellenistic *sophia* philosophical influence in the Wisdom of Solomon (Cf. Ronald Murphy, “Wisdom in the Old Testament,” *ADB* Vol 6 [1992], 930. See also J Reese, *Hellenistic Influence on the Book of Wisdom and Its Consequences* (Rome: AnBib 41, 1970), 108-184 [cited in Ronald Murphy, “Wisdom in the Old Testament,” 930]). Some see the sophisticated cultural elements in *Qoheleth* (eg, R Braun, *Kohelet und die fruhhellenistische Popularphilosophie*, BZAW 130 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973], cited in Murphy, “Wisdom in the Old Testament,” 930); others argue for the Mesopotamian influence (eg, O Loretz, *Qohelet und der alte Orient* [Freiburg, 1964], 90-134, cited in Murphy, “Wisdom in the Old Testament,” 930). Hengel recognizes some dialogue with Greek thoughts in Ben Sirach (M Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*. 2 vols [Philadelphia, 1974], 131-175, cited in Murphy, “Wisdom in the Old Testament,” 930), but Middendorp argues for its strong dependence upon a theogony (T Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus* [Leiden: E J Brill, 1973], 13-24, cited in Murphy, “Wisdom in the Old Testament,” 930).

As regards who those sages really were, some scholars suggest the existence a “school” (for example, *Qoheleth* as a teacher, Eccl 12:9 and Ben Sirach’s school, Sir 51:23), but it is difficult to know the exact nature of it. Had such a school existed, then, Israel’s wisdom literature might have come out of a combination of two traditions - the work of the school (probably the court school in Jerusalem - the consideration is due to the similarities that it presents with the Egyptian wisdom, which was the work of a royal or scribal class (cf. Roland Murphy, “Wisdom in the Old Testament,” 921) and the wise saying traditions circulated freely among families, clans and tribes. However, citing the difficulties in determining the *Sitz im Leben* of the sages, R N Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*, BZAW 135 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1974, 54, 69, cited in Murphy, “Wisdom in the Old Testament,” 921), has denied that such a class of sages existed, and has tried to explain the movement as the product of “the activity of

The books of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes (קהלת) and two Apocryphal books (included in the *deutero* canon - the Roman Catholic and Orthodox canons), Wisdom of Ben Sirach or Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom of Solomon are classified as the Wisdom literature. Sages (elders of families, cities and tribes, scribes of schools and royal/temple institutions, and counselors of the royal court) were believed to be behind the production and dissemination of this Israelite wisdom literature.²³ In the Talmudic period, rabbis (or scribes) were considered successors to the sages of the Bible.²⁴ Jesus was to some extent regarded as a wisdom teacher (Mt 11:19; 13:54; Lk 2:40, 52; Ac 6:3).

Wisdom, sometimes manifested as feminine, claims its origin from God. Order and retribution are the main themes of the wisdom theology.²⁵ Wisdom makes a sound judgment and takes a correct attitude toward life and conduct; it does not value the quantity of knowledge by itself, but the ethical and moral dimensions of how we evaluate human experience and act on it. Beginning from God's creation of order out of chaos, order is projected as possible in family, society and nation if people so love wisdom, "Wisdom and creation are mirror images of each other."²⁶ Wisdom also speaks of questions of life experience such as suffering, life and death, and meaning. In its wider meaning, the word חכמה also denotes divination and magic (Ge 41:8; Ex 7:11); interpretation of dreams (Da 2:27); skill, ability, wise (Ex 35:35; 36:2,8; 1 Ch 22:15-16); and cleverness or cunning (Pr 30:24-28; 2 Sa 13:3; 14:2). The function of חכמה is more or less the same as the function of צדק (righteousness). Truthfulness, fidelity, kindness, honesty and control of appetites are the recurring teachings in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

The term "Deuteronomistic History" is adapted from Martin Noth's classical work, *The Deuteronomic History*,²⁷ to designate the books of Joshua-2 Kings (Former Prophets). The term reflects a scholarly hypothesis that these books, using Deuteronomy as a prologue, constitute a single literary unit and a unified theological-ethical concept, that is, obedience to the

men of superior intelligence." However, texts like Jeremiah 18:18 and Ezekiel 7:26 cf. Isaiah 29:14 and Jeremiah 8:8-9, and the activity of the counselor, would suggest that the sages constituted a recognizable group.

As for King Solomon's authorship of many of the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Wisdom of Solomon, he, as a wise man par excellence, must have surely spoken so many wisdom words (I Ki 5:9-14, ET 4:29-34). However, for most part, he would better fit as patron as in the case of Davidic "authorship" of Psalms (cf. Murphy, "Wisdom in the Old Testament," 921).

²³ Cf. R R Hutton, *Charisma and Authority in Israelite Society*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1994), 172-176; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel*, in Douglas A Knight, ed., *Library of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1995), 9-65.

²⁴ Cf. Lawrence Boadt, "Wisdom, Wisdom Literature," 1380-1381.

²⁵ Cf. John Rogerson & P Davies, *The Old Testament World* (Cambridge: University Press, 1989), 294-298.

²⁶ Cf. R E Murphy, "Wisdom and Creation," *JBL* 104 (1985), 3-11, quoted in Murphy, "Wisdom in the Old Testament," 924.

²⁷ Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (ET, Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1981; first published in German in 1943). In this thesis, the abbreviation 'Dtr' is used both for "Deuteronomistic" (theology) and for

Deuteronomic laws will lead to well being and continually possessing of the land and disobedience to destruction and exile. Subsequent studies came to identify the Deuteronomist's hands in certain texts of Genesis-Numbers, Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah, and the fifteen prophetic books (Later Prophets) as well.

Noth and his followers believe that the DH is a carefully edited work of historiography of the middle sixth-century exilic pessimistic theologian-historian-redactor (Dtr), whose view of Israel's history was shadowed by Israel's failure to observe the Deuteronomic laws. Shaped by the Deuteronomic laws, the Dtr developed his Deuteronomistic history by framing it with Mosaic traditions. He also added other traditions selectively such as tales of conquest and settlement, prophetic narratives and speeches, official annals and records – “Books of the Acts of Solomon,” “Books of the Chronicles,” “Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.” The Dtr was also at liberty to interpolate his own materials using the major characters' names. He then edited, corrected, shaped and ordered his history with a motive of producing a unified history of Israel.²⁸

The P materials in the Old Testament are believed to have been written by the priest-authors or redactors, who reconstructed the Mosaic Pentateuchal traditions according to their theology of monotheistic holiness, an advocacy for a central cultic ritual, and fond memory of the glorious past (history and genealogy). Almost all of the Leviticus belongs to P. Other P materials are also found throughout Genesis-Exodus and a few texts in Deuteronomy and Joshua. Leviticus mainly deals with matters and laws pertaining to the priesthood (in Jewish tradition it is known as כַּבְּדִים תֹּרָה, “the priestly law”). The book of Numbers contains mostly the status and roles of the Levites. P materials in other books are broadly narratives. There are some Priestly Psalms as well

“Deuteronomist” (theologian/redactor). The context will determine which one it is referring to. The term “Deuteronomic” is used to refer to the book of Deuteronomy and its theology.

²⁸ Cf. Gary N Knoppers & J Gordon McConville, eds., *Reconstructing Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*, Sources for Biblical Theological Study, Vol 8 (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2000); Gary N Knoppers, “Deuteronomistic History,” *EDB* (2000), 341; V Philip Long, ed., *Israel's Past in Present Research: Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography* (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1999); Stephen L McKenzie, “Deuteronomistic History,” *ABD* Vol 2 (1992), 160-168; Brian Peckham, *The Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*, HSM 35 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985); Leslie J Hoppe, O F M, “Deuteronomy, Book of,” *EDB* (2000), 431-432.

For further discussion on the Deuteronomistic History, see Brian Peckham, *History and Prophecy* (New York: Doubleday, 1993); J Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical Historiography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); R Rendtorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); Gehrard von Rad, *Deuteronomy* (London: SCM, 1966); H W Wolff, “The Kerygma of the Deuteronomistic History,” in W Brueggemann and H W Wolff, eds., *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982); F M Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977); Steven L McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History*. VTSup 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1991); M Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972); Mark A O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1989); Iain Provan, *Hezekiah and the Book of Kings*, BZAW 72 (Berlin, 1988); Baruch Halpern and David S Vanderhooft, “The Edition of Kings in the 7th-6th Centuries B.C.E.” *HUCA* 62 (1991), 179-244.

(eg, Ps 15; 24; 68; 84). Ezra and Ezekiel also belong to the priestly theology. Blenkinsopp²⁹ assigns P to the second temple period (sixth century BC) priesthood, who dominated Israel's religious, political, and intellectual leadership of the time. These priests were trained in "homiletics" and an Egyptian type of "house of life." The curriculum covered, among other things, writing annals, law, and rituals. Milgrom³⁰ and Kaufmann,³¹ on the other hand, assign a pre-exilic date for P based on its terminology and theological emphases.

The priestly theology views God as the creator, the God of the universe (not only the God of Israel) (Ge 1:1-2:4), holy, and whose creative power brings order out of chaos. The cultic life in and around the sanctuary (temple) reflects and represents God's holiness and the created cosmos order. The praxis of the priestly theology includes: polemic against paganism and the evisceration of the demonic, holiness contagion, a symbolic system (life versus death), the universal blood prohibition, and the theology of sacrifice (well-being offering, purification offering, and reparation offering).³²

Although this is a research on the promise of land in the Old Testament, our study will mainly based on selective passages from the Pentateuch, former prophets (especially Joshua, Ezra-Nehemiah), and later prophets (especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Micah), as land promise themes are mostly found in these texts. It is not always easy to draw a clear-cut demarcation line between the DH and P for some texts in the Pentateuch. When this thesis refers a Pentateuchal text as a DH or P, it is a hypothesis only; nor does it rob the Pentateuch of its Mosaic authority. It is basically to refer to the theological trajectory of a text in its final form, as texts such as Genesis 12:6; Dt 1:5; 34:5-6, 10 would clearly support the presence of a Pentateuchal redactor(s). The Pentateuch is still Mosaic. Tigay, commenting on the Mosaic authority of Deuteronomy, and for that matter, the Pentateuch as a whole, affirms:

According to a talmudic tale, when Moses was on Sinai receiving the Torah he was shown the classroom of Rabbi Akiba, the great legal scholar of many centuries later. Moses grieved when he could not understand the discussion, until he heard a student ask Akiba for the source of what he was saying, and Akiba answered, "This is a law given to Moses at Sinai." The great structure of Jewish law that eventuated from Moses' original teachings is ultimately his, even if he would not recognize the forms it would eventually take. In that sense the writers of Deuteronomy and other Pentateuchal books, too, have given us the teaching of Moses, that is, a statement of his fundamental monotheistic teaching, designed to resist the assimilatory temptations of the writers' age and to preserve monotheism for the future.³³

²⁹ Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet*, 70, 100, 109.

³⁰ Milgrom, "Priestly ("P") Source," 459; see also G Rendsburg, "Late Biblical Hebrew and Date of "P,"" *JANES* 12 (1980), 65-80; Avi Hurwits, "The Evidence of Language in Dating the Priestly Code," *RB* 81 (1974), 24-56.

³¹ Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, translated and abridged by Moshe Greenberg (New York: Schocken Books, 1960), 175-200 (cited in Milgrom, "Priestly ["P"] Source," 458-459).

³² Cf. Jacob Milgrom, "Priestly ("P") Source," *ABD* Vol 5 (1992), 454-458.

³³ Jeffrey H Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 1996), xxvi (italics mine).

Christian scholarship, if it is to be a true scholarship, will benefit the Christian community and serve for the betterment of the church and the contemporary world. With a sincere heart and a heavy burden, I will, therefore, attempt, and this is my prayer as well, to make this study relevant and to meet the need of the church and humanity in this important and sensitive issue of land. As this is a theological-ethical study of the Old Testament from a Christian perspective, we will attempt to understand what the promise of land meant to the Israelites and what it means to us today. We will study the latter by giving relevant examples, some of which are drawn from personal experiences. The approach of this thesis is, therefore, both academic and preaching, as I believe these two can and must go hand in hand in Christian Old Testament scholarship, especially in studying the Old Testament theologically and ethically. In so doing, chapter 1 (this introductory chapter) identifies a threefold problem, states a hypothesis or a summary of the thesis, defines some terms in relation to land promise with a textual survey of each, and outlines the approaches of this thesis. Chapter 2 will study the history of interpretation of the promise of land. Chapter 3 will analyze the nature of the promise of land by examining the Old Testament land covenants – whether they are conditional or unconditional. Chapter 4 will discuss the conditions of the promise of land. In chapter 5, we will attempt to discover the purpose of the promise of land by analyzing Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 4:23; 3:18 and 5:1. I will then conclude this research with chapter 6, outlining some possible implications for modern ethical decision making about land issues facing the world today.

Scripture texts used in this thesis are from the NIV (copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society) unless otherwise stated. However, the American spelling is employed for the texts. The Hebrew texts are from the Logos Library's *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia - Morphologically Tagged Edition* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research System, Inc., 1998). The terms "man" or "men," brother, and "he/his" are used in a generic sense to describe humankind or a community that includes both male and female unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. References for secondary literatures that are cited in primary literatures consulted by this thesis are provided in footnotes; hence they will not appear in the bibliography. The subject has already been studied by many. But most of them are surveys of land in general rather than the ethics of the promise of land in particular. Therefore, I believe it is worth attempting to do a research of this kind. Before we proceed further, it is appropriate, therefore, to first see what has been done before. After a brief summary of the history of the interpretation of the promise of land during the last century, we will particularly study the works of the last three decades represented by Walter Brueggemann, Suzanne Boorer, and Moshe Weinfeld. It is to this that we now turn.

Chapter Two

HISTORY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PROMISE OF LAND

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The scholarly interest in the promise of land or the theology of land is clearly reflected in the number of works on the subject that appeared during the last century. In this chapter, after briefly introducing the scholarly trend in the study of the promise of land during the last century, we will particularly study three works, namely, those of Brueggemann, Boorer, and Weinfeld, which appeared during the last three decades, with special reference to their views on the nature, conditions, and purpose of the promise of land.

2.2. FROM 1880's TO 1970's

For scholars of this period for whom the documentary hypothesis¹ was assumed, the role of the land promise theme was seen as providing the basic structure for the formation of the Pentateuch - the promise to the patriarchs and its fulfillment (or potential fulfillment) in the conquest.² For some scholars, for example, Wellhausen, Staerk, Galling, Alt, von Rad, and Clark, the land promise themes were believed to have originated at a literary level J. They were believed to have been composed by the authors of the sources during the early monarchic period.³ For Clark, "the land promise was originally part of the war oracles to individual clans and tribes attacking cities or small areas of land. The idea of a promise of the whole land was a secondary expansion

¹ Cf. Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis or JEDP theory (cf. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* [New York: Meridian, 1957], first published in German, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* [Berlin, 1883]), also called literary criticism or source criticism. Advocates of this theory believe that the Pentateuch is made of mainly four sources: two that prefer to use אֱלֹהִים (Elohim) for the name of God, one that uses יְהוָה (Yahweh) (sometimes together with Elohim) for the name of God, and Deuteronomy. Of the two that use אֱלֹהִים, one is priestly in character and the other nonpriestly, differentiated as the Priestly (P) and Elohist (E) sources respectively. The source that uses Yahweh for the name of God is identified as the Yahwist (J) (from the English translation 'Jehovah') and believed to be the oldest source (10th-9th century BC). The Elohist source (E) and Deuteronomy (D) are associated with the early prophetic movement (8th century BC) and Josiah's reform (seventh century - 625) respectively. The Priestly source (P) is assigned to a priestly writer of the fifth century postexilic temple period (of Ezra?) (Cf. David L Petersen, "The Formation of the Pentateuch," in J L Mays, D L Petersen, and K H Richards, eds., *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995], 31-45; J Van Seters, "The Pentateuch," in Steven L McKenzie & M Patrick Graham, eds., *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1998], 9).

² Cf. Suzanne Boorer, *The Promise of the Land as Oath: A Key to the Formation of the Pentateuch* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992), 95.

³ These scholars assumed that Israel's literary activities began with the early monarchic period.

with no historical life setting, analogous to the combination to a single story of the many diverse conquest traditions.”⁴

Others, like Noth, Zimmerli, Wolff, and Westermann believe that the land promise themes originated at a pre-literary J period and were incorporated, elaborated, and re-emphasized later by the sources. For advocates of this theory, the land promise theme is earlier than Deuteronomy. The motive of the promulgation of the promise theme was to justify and guarantee the possession and continued possession of the land – either just after settlement (Staerk, Noth, Wolff) or in the Davidic/Solomonic Kingdom (von Rad, Clark) when the land was secure. The promise of land both in J and pre-J was, therefore, they assert, unconditional, but was made conditional later in the seventh-century Deuteronomy when the continued possession of the land became uncertain, as, for Deuteronomy, the promise of land will be totally fulfilled and the Israelites will continue to possess the land only if they are obedient to the land covenant laws.⁵

2.3. FROM 1970's ONWARDS

With the rise of new hypotheses that suggest the formation of Pentateuch as a part of the overall redactional formation of Genesis-Kings, the documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch is seriously challenged if not completely rejected. The promise of land not only functions as supporting arguments for these new hypotheses, but is interpreted differently in different contexts. Scholars of this trend, for example, Schmid, Van Seters, Rendtorff, believe that Deuteronomy is earlier than Numbers-Kings. The older conditional land promise in Deuteronomy was, therefore, reinterpreted as an unconditional one in Numbers-Kings. The

⁴ Quoted in Christopher J H Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 7.

⁵ Cf. J Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, 32; W Staerk, *Studien Zur Religions – und Sprachgeschichte des Alten Testaments I* (Berlin: Reimer, 1899), 21-53; K Galling, *Die Erwählungstraditionen Israels*, BZAW 48 (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1928), 37-56; A Alt, “Der Gott der Väter,” *BWANT III/12* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1929); ET “The God of the Fathers,” *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*, 3-77; G von Rad, *Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuch*, BWANT XXVI (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1938); ET “The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch,” *The Problem of Hexateuch and other Essays* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 1-78; “The Promised Land and Yahweh's Land,” *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 79-93; *Theologie des Alten Testaments I* (Munich: Kaiser, 1957); ET *Old Testament Theology, I* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 167-171; W M Clark, *The Origin and Development of the Land Promise theme in the Old Testament* (Unpublished thesis; Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1964); M Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1948); ET *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 54-58; W Zimmerli, “Promise and Fulfillment,” in C Westermann, ed., *Essays in Old Testament Interpretation* (London: SCM 1963), 89-122; H W Wolff, “Das Kerygma des Jahwisten,” *Evt 24* (1964), 73-79; ET “The Kerygma of the Yahwist,” in W Brueggemann and H W Wolff, eds., *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 41-66; C Westermann, “Arten der Erzählung in der Genesis,” *Forschung am Alten Testament*, TBü 24 (Kaiser, 1964); *Die Verheissungen an die Väter*, FRLANT 116 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1976); ET *The Promises to the Fathers: Studies on the Patriarchal Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) (cited in Boorer, *the Promise of Land as Oath*, 38-60).

purpose was not to justify the possession of the land at a time when this was secure, but to reassure the people the continuing possession of the land, now under threat in the late monarchic period, or future possession of the land now lost in the exile.⁶

In the following, we will study in more detail the three works selected, which I believe are important contributions to the studies of the promise of land. The first work is by an American scholar, Walter Brueggemann.⁷ Brueggemann's work is important because of his study on the ethical aspects of the promise of land. The second work comes from the German scholarship tradition, by Suzanne Boorer.⁸ Boorer is chosen for her diachronic analysis of the land oath texts to introduce us this school's approach to the interpretation of the promise of land. The third and latest thesis is the work of a Jewish scholar from Israel itself, Moshe Weinfeld.⁹ Weinfeld's work is useful and stimulating because of his comprehensive and Jewish approach to the subject. It is good to hear from a Jewish scholar to whose forefathers the land was promised. The Anglo-American evangelical position is represented in Christopher J H Wright.¹⁰ However, we will not separately study his work here, as we will consult and analyze him in the chapters that follow wherever appropriate.

⁶ Cf. Boorer, *The Promise of Land as Oath*, 77-111 and literatures cited there: H H Schmid, "In Search of New Approaches in Pentateuchal Research," *JSOT* 3 (1977), 33-42; *Der sogenannte Jahwist: Beobachtungen und Fragen zu Pentateuchforschung* (Zurich: Theologischen, 1976), 119-153; J Van Seters, "Confessional Reformulation in the Exilic Period," *VT* 22 (1972), 448-459; *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical Historiography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); R Rendtorff, "The Future of Pentateuchal Criticism," *Henoch* VI (1984), 1-14; *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); "Pentateuchal Studies on the Move," *JSOT* 3 (1977), 43-45; *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch*, BZAW 147 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977); "The Yahwist as Theologian? The Dilemma of Pentateuchal Criticism," *JSOT* 3 (1977), 2-10. For views against Schmid, Van Seters and Rendtorff, see J A Emerton, "The Origin of the Promises to the Patriarchs in the Older Sources of the Book of Genesis," *VT* 32 (1982), 14-32 and J Hoftijzer, *Die Verheissungen an die drei Erzväter* (Leiden: Brill, 1956) who assign the land promise to the late pre-exilic or exilic.

⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Places as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, in Brueggemann, in W Brueggemann & Donahue, J R, eds., *OBT* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). Brueggemann served as Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of Old Testament at Eden Theological Seminary, St Louis, and later William Marcellus McPheeters Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur; both in the USA.

⁸ Suzanne Boorer, *The Promise of Land as Oath*. Boorer is the Professor of Old Testament at Perth Theological Hall, Australia. This published work is a revised edition of her dissertation at Emory University under the supervision of Dr Gene Tucker.

⁹ Moshe Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by Israelites* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Weinfeld is the Professor of Biblical Studies at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Six chapters were added for publication to his three lectures: the promise of the land to the patriarchs and its realization in the light of Greek foundation stories; two divergent views concerning the extent of the *promised* land; and the ban of the Canaanites, its development, its meaning, and its significance, presented at the University of California at Berkeley during the spring semester of 1989 as visiting Taubman Professor.

¹⁰ Christopher J H Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

2.3.1. Walter Brueggemann

Brueggemann's phenomenological-ethical approach to land is basically a study of what the promise of land meant to the ancient Israelites of the Old Testament times and what it means to us today. He develops his land theme through the three major blocks of Israel's traditions: landless sojourning and wilderness wandering periods till the crossing of Jordan, landed times in the promised land, and from the exile to the New Testament times. Land in the post-exilic Hellenistic Maccabean period and New Testament times are beyond the scope of this study, and so we will not analyze them in detail. Although he primarily focuses on land, Brueggemann rightly believes that land is a prism through which other aspects of Israel's faith can be seen.

First, Brueggemann highlights how Israel had gone through so many difficulties because of the very promise of land (sojourning, slavery in Egypt, wilderness wandering, exile) and their yearning to have a place of their own. He then compares struggles that many groups and individuals go through throughout the centuries (being denied land, being uprooted from their roots, being conquered and enslaved).

Though without heir and without land, the patriarchs¹¹ sojourned in *anticipation* of the promised land. The Bible, affirms Brueggemann, is clearly interested in anticipation and relocation; it is not concerned with expulsion and dislocation even though theological interpreters are often preoccupied with it. Theologically applying the patriarchs' sojourning life of anticipation to the contemporary experience, Brueggemann sees that life is set between expulsion and anticipation, of losing and expecting, of being uprooted and rerooted, of being dislocated because of impertinence and being relocated in trust. The history of anticipation, as soon as it is satisfied, he concludes, lives at the brink of the history of expulsion.

The forty years of wilderness wandering was the most difficult time in Israel's history. If the sojourning land was a land without heir because of barren women (Ge 11:30, 25:21, 29:31), the wilderness was a land not sown because of the barren land (Jer 2:2), both without the same זרע (heir or seed), without entry to the future. However, at the end of the wilderness, three great testimonies of Israel remained – trust and obey, God's presence, and God's provision. Joshua and Caleb, Obedient and trustful, entered the promised land while those who did not obey the Lord were denied entry. The wilderness should have been a place of all lacks, but in fact, it was a place where Israel lacked nothing (Dt 2:7; 29:5) because God was with them. In this sense,

¹¹ Abraham (Ge 11:30) and Isaac (Ge 25:21) were without children during the early part of their life in the promised land because of their barren wives. Jacob's wife Rachel is also reported barren (Ge 29:31).

God's *presence* is a prerequisite to his provision. The reflection on this experience of forty years of wilderness (landlessness), yet lacking nothing must encourage us, Brueggemann analogizes, to make a remarkable affirmation that a place where God is present is a place where nothing is lacking. And the Jordan crossing analogously represents the moment of the most radical transformation of any historical person or group, the moment of empowerment or enlandment, the decisive event of being turfed and at home for the first time. The contemporary society needs to remember that like everything in the wilderness, the presence of God is not given in terms desired or expected. Like manna, it is always enough on which to survive, but not too much; he can be graciously received but not stored or presumed upon, and it is given out of fidelity and trust but never fully seen and controlled. What a hope and lesson for today's wandering souls and greedy consumers.

Next, Brueggemann studies the conditions of the promise of land. A conditional land promise was assumed for the pre-exilic texts. The wilderness wandering was over. The Israelites soon would be crossing the Jordan and entering into the promised land. Standing at the other side of the border, Moses announced to the Israelites that the good land they were going to possess, where they would be satiated, came from the Lord as a gift (Ex 16:3, 8, 12, 18; Dt 6:10-11; 8:7-10; 11:10-12; Jos 21:45; 23:14-16). However, a gift also entails responsibility. This would involve Israel with land and with the Lord, never only with the Lord as though to live only in intense obedience, never only with land, as though simply to possess and manage. Satiated, they should not forget the giver and go after other gods (Dt 6:12, 14; 8:11-19; 11:16); having seen and tasted the riches of the land, they should not covet (cf. Jos 7; 8:1). They should have no images, which will take them away from historical remembering (Dt 8:17). They must keep the Sabbath¹² so that their life in the land would not be coercive; and they must honor and care for covenant brothers and sisters who may not have power but do have dignity (Ex 21:21-24; 23:6-9; Dt 10:19; 14:27; 15:1-18; 22:1-4; 24:17-22; Lev 25:25-55; Am 5:10-12). Above all, they must observe the Torah and listen to the Lord if they want to conquer the land and to continue to securely dwell in the land and enjoy its produce (Nu 12:32-34; Dt 1:26-28, 32-35; Jos 1:7-8; Mic 3:11).

The king of Israel should be one from the brethren, he must not multiply horses, wives, silver and gold for himself, he must read the Torah, and his heart may not be lifted up above his

¹² Brueggemann explains the purposes of Sabbath as for freeing slaves (an extreme form of debt cancellation) (Ex 21:1-11; Dt 15:12-18), for resting land (Lev 25) and for canceling debt (Dt 15:1-11). Land Sabbath in particular is a reminder that (a) land is not from us but is a gift to us, and (b) land is not fully given over to our satiation. Sabbaths protect the poor from being bought and sold (Am 8:4-6) (Brueggemann, *The Land*, 63-65).

brethren (Dt 17:14-20).¹³ *One from the brethren*: The king of Israel must be a covenantal brother, who remembers barrenness and birth (sojourning), slavery and freedom (Egypt), hunger and manna (wilderness), and above all the conditions of the promise of land. He must be the one who will not reduce the land to coercion and brothers to slaves, the one who is bound by common loyalties and memories. *Horses*: The king should not rely on his own military strength to overcome the precariousness, which belongs to the covenantal history. To save the land, he must rather listen to the words of Yahweh. *Wives*: In part they symbolize self-indulgence when acquired in multiple fashion, but more importantly multiple marriages have to do with political marriages, with commitments which will create a reliable network of alliances; again a way of being secure on one's own terms. *Silver and gold* enhance a king's existence, which is a normal way of being a king, but not for the Israelite king. Verses 18-20 makes the *reading of the Torah* as the king's central activity in order to keep management focused on the central memory and vision of Israel, that is, Yahweh and the history of his land promise. *His heart may not be lifted up above his brethren*. The king is to be one among the equal brethren. As such he should not take the land, Yahweh's covenantal gift, and turn it into absolute, royal space.

The Israelites and their kings must not forget all these conditions (Dt 8:11). But they were all soon forgotten (Dt 32:15-18). With the death of Joshua and Caleb, who managed the land with a conscious memory of its history, the Israelites soon forgot the history of the land and were in the process of losing it again. Land management during the period of the judges was marked by a time when everyone was doing what was right in his own eyes, and thus grieving the land (Jdg 17-21). The period of the monarchy was no exception. Except for David and Josiah, the Israelite kings did everything they could to lose the land - from Solomon's horses, wives, forced labor, silver, gold, cedar, and cinnamon (1 Ki 4:1-6; 5:13; 9-11) through Jeroboam's high places (1 Ki 12:28-14:18) to Ahab-Jezebel (Jezebel's Baal prophets, 1 Ki 16:31-33, her killing of the Lord's prophets, Ki 18:13-14, and her wrong conception of Naboth's covenantal inalienable inherited vineyard as if it is a tradable commodity because she did not belong to "one of the brethren," and her use of Torah for her own ends, 1 Ki 21), just to mention a few examples. Even David had his own share of sins. He was beginning to indulge in luxury, a typical bureaucratic life (2 Sa 11-12). He stayed at home when his soldiers were in battle and acted as if he owned everything including others' wives. He became a memo-writing king (to Joab about the fate of Uriah;

¹³ The kingship system was not God's primary choice for Israel for managing the land (1 Sa 8:7-8). Although the Lord granted the system knowing that they would ask for it one day, as nations surrounding them all had it, alternative land management in terms of kingship, however, was not to be sought too easily. Israel was warned that such a model would undo her (1 Sa 8:11-20; 12:25; Dt 17:16; Hos 8:13; 9:3, 6). If a time should come to have a king, then it must not be the type of kingship of their surrounding nations, theirs should be different, a covenantal king.

Jezebel too did the same to Naboth), a one-way bureaucratic communication, instead of word hearing and talking, which is a two-way communication system, designed for covenantal land relationship. Had he not repented when a word-hearing prophet Nathan confronted him, he would have brought his own disaster, as was the case with other kings (cf. Ps 51; 2 Sa 15:25-26; 16:11-12; 23:13-17).

The kingship system was designed for Israel's life in the land (Dt 18:9-22). Kings were to manage the land by listening to God, as was the case at the border – Moses speaking and the people listening (Dt 6:4; 8:3). For this purpose God raised up prophets in the land during the times of the monarchy (Dt 18:9-22). However, the history of Israel during the monarchy was marked by tension between kings and prophets. The prophets confronted the kings over and over again for treating the precarious promised land as if it were their royally secured land. But the kings would not listen. As a result, Israel's history (better, royal history) was terminated by the Lord of the land who is the Lord of the Torah (Mic 2:1-3; Am 4:1-3; 6:1-6; cf. Dt 8:11-20; Am 7:17; Hos 2:3-13; 9:17; 10:15; 12:8-19; Isa 47:1-3; Isa 61:1-14). They did not really expect it to happen, but it did. They found themselves without land, wandering by the rivers of Babylon (Ps 137; 2 Ki 24:14-15). This grasping of land by kings, Brueggemann warns, has important points of contact with a production-consumption set of values today in which it is assumed that more leads to well-being and security:

It is dawning in some quarters that we have gone as far as we can with that line of effort, and it has not kept its promise. The theme of land on the way to exile raises the hard question about the relation of production-consumption to the issues of justice and righteousness. The production-consumption values inevitably place a central priority upon utility, upon reward for people who can perform useful tasks. Such values tend to discard people without utility.... If utility for production and consumption is not a norm for landedness, then we are given new pause about urban development and "progress" which claims the right to relocate and reassign people, to move them from storied place to history-less space. And in new ways urbanization will need to focus on the presence of stories for humanness and the difference between trusted place and coerced space. Related to this is the of course the crunch of pollution and energy. After an interlude, we have regressed to believe that pollution problems will not endure and hopefully will solve themselves. We are left to reflect on biblical understanding of pollution that leads to exile (cf. Jer. 3:1-5). All of these issues revolve around our values which make us insatiable (cf. Lev. 26:26; Hos. 4:10). We are consumed by aliens, alien values and alien loyalties, and we eat our way into exile (cf. Hos. 7:9).¹⁴

Finally, Brueggemann studies how that dreaded exile had turned into a blessing. Exile was the last thing Israel would want to happen. But Jeremiah confidently announced, which Brueggemann calls "the central scandal of the Bible,"¹⁵ that radical loss and discontinuity did happen to be the source of real newness. Jeremiah's view surely must have been a minority view, that the *exiles* were real *heirs*. And conversely those who clung to the land were the ultimate exiles, for landholding was regarded as an act of disobedience (Jer 24:8-10; cf. Nu 14:39-45) and land-loss as an act of faith when Yahweh has willed land loss (Jer 24:4-7). There is no more

¹⁴ Brueggemann, *The Land*, 194-195.

¹⁵ *ibid*, 122.

radical text, Brueggemann asserts, than the parable of Jeremiah 24, for it is the Lord of land announcing landlessness as the way of the future; newness comes in discontinuity to those who have no claim (cf. Jer 29:5-7). Jeremiah's strange act of buying the land belonging to his family (Jer 32) in the midst of that chaotic exile was in fact a strong indication and anticipation that a new history would dawn for Israel again. The Lord would bring them back to the land and restore their fortunes [שוב שבת] (Jer 30:18-22; 31:2-5) as he has promised to their fathers (Jer 32; 33:6-9; cf. Ge 12:1-3; 15:6), for he never finally wills landlessness for his people (cf. Isa 55:6-14; cf. Dt 4:29-31).

For Ezekiel, with a priestly high vision of the glory and holiness of God with his temple and his city, it was God himself, with all his glory, who was exiled with Israel, the temple, and the city; the only God in history who has been exiled (Eze 7:23; 8:6; 9:9). Yahweh in his sovereignty has the capacity to end history (Eze 33:28-29) and to initiate it. So for Ezekiel, it was God himself who brought a new history or made a new covenant (Eze 36:22-28) with his people again for his own reputation. Ezekiel's new covenant, which Zimmerli calls *sola gratia*,¹⁶ was unconditional and different from the old conditional covenant. In the old, Israel's occupation of land was conditional covenantal, and when the condition was not followed; the land was lost, so it called for repentance in order to receive the land again (Eze 33:11-12). But nothing was required or expected of Israel in the new covenant initiated by God in the very covenantal formula of the Old Testament: "You shall dwell in the land.... you shall be my people, and I will be your god" (Eze 36:28b; 37:12, 14). Ezekiel presented the surety of return to the promised land in three images. Yahweh's exile has come to an end; his glory has returned to the temple in the same manner in which he has left it (43:1-5; 44:4). The land has been conquered again by Yahweh and redistributed to the Israelites to be their נחלה (inheritance). This was done after the manner of the land distribution of Joshua (47:13-48:29). Jerusalem has been restored to be the abode of God and named "Yahweh is there" (48:35), the name for the temple, for the city, for the land, for the history.

The Priestly tradition of the Tetrateuch, Brueggemann analyzes, too deals with the new history of the promised land. The creation of order out of chaos, which is the central theme of the sixth century exilic P (Genesis 1:1-2:4a), is none other than a new history of order in the land in contrast to formlessness and void and darkness of the exilic life. The same words תהו ובהו (formless and void) in 1:2 are used by Isaiah to refer to exile as chaos. The exile was a time of the best story collection and telling time of it in Israel's history, with the barren giving birth to

¹⁶ W Zimmerli, "The Word of God in the Book of Ezekiel," in R Funk, ed., *History and Hermeneutics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 13 (cited in Brueggemann, *The Land*, 140).

the child of promise as its central motif, that is, to the one without future or hope (Jer 29:14) is given the impossible blessing (Ge 11:30; 18:9-15; 25:21; 29:31).

The second Isaiah announced the not pitied (Hos 1:6) and not comforted (La 1:2, 9, 17, 21) Israel as comforted again (Isa 40:9-10; 41:17-19; 44:26-28; 45:1-7) because their God reigns (52:7). If the Lord reigns, that means the end of exile (homelessness), because he is a God who wills land for his people (47:1-5; 49:7-13; 51:2-3; 54:1-3; 9-10, 13, 17; 55:3; cf 2 Sa 7; Hos 2:21-23; 10:12).

The Lord has willed the return. So even Babylon, as Ezekiel predicted, could not prevent it. Babylon was defeated by Persia who allowed the Israelites to return to their land and practice their religion. Israel came once again to the land. Haggai, Zechariah, and Zerubbabel found the land surrounded by Samaritans, Edomites, and "Arabs." Syncretism that can be caused by these people should be checked. Whatever it took, this time Israel was determined to manage the land exclusively for the Lord. They did not want to repeat the same mistake. In so doing, Jerusalem must be exclusively claimed and kept holy for the Lord in response to his jealous love for her (Zec 1:14-17; 7:9-10; 8:2-3; Mal 3:10-12), thus the reconstruction of Jerusalem and its temple were priorities. The purification that included allegiance to Torah (Ne 10:29), avoidance of mixed marriages (v 30), and honoring of Sabbath and Jubilee (v 31) under Nehemiah and Ezra can best be understood in this context (Ezr 9:11-12; 10:10-11, 44; Ne 5:3-11; 9:36-37; 10:29-39; 13:15-26). They understood now, which the monarchic Israel had failed to do, that the land, if it were to be retained, would need to be treated in terms of the urgency, precariousness, and graciousness of the covenant. Nehemiah's last statements clearly expressed the epitome of these holiness and separation movements: "Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign, and I established the duties of the priests and Levites,¹⁷ each in his work; and I provided for the wood offering, at appointed times, and for the first fruits" (13:30-31 RSV; cf. 9:2).

In his concluding hermeneutical reflections, Brueggemann strongly argues for a phenomenological¹⁸ approach to the promise of land against an eschatological¹⁹ interpretation of it, and warns his readers to take the conditions of land promise literally and seriously. The promise of land seeks and experiences the meaning of life in a community, in difference from the existentialist's emancipation that seeks meaning and promises, if there were any, in private

¹⁷ "The Levites are teachers who insist that Israel should not and cannot live like other nations. The reform is not a desperate moment of parochialism but an attempt to order life, community, and land in covenantal ways and to avoid the Syro-Hittite alternative which denies Israel's holy destiny" (Brueggemann, *The Land*, 158).

¹⁸ This is an approach that advocates that the promise of land is to be taken as materially and physically.

¹⁹ This is a spiritualized approach that takes the promise of land as the promise of eternal life in heaven. For example, see W D Davies, *The Gospel and the Land* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 367, 396-400.

terms. The central problem of humankind, Brueggemann says, is not emancipation but rootage, not meaning but belonging, not separation from community but location within it, not isolation from others but placement deliberately between the generation of promise and fulfillment. Covenant never concerned only Israel and Yahweh or church and Yahweh, but the land is always present to the interaction and is very much a decisive factor. The covenant of Yahweh and Israel is characteristically about land, about promise of land not yet given, about retention of land now possessed, and about land-loss because of the covenant breaking (we will come back to this in chapter 3). Israel never had a desire for a relationship with Yahweh in a vacuum; it was always for and in land

Brueggemann, then, sums up his studies with challenges that he believes Christians cannot and should not deny or ignore. If we accept the Old Testament, Brueggemann concludes, then we must also accept Israel and its land promise. “While the Arabs surely have rights and legitimate grievances, the Jewish people are peculiarly the pained voice of the land in the history of humanity, grieved Rachel weeping (Jer 31:15).”²⁰ The promise of land in the Old Testament demands a phenomenological approach. This requires land to be handled always as a gift not to be presumed upon and managed according to the conditions provided as an arena of justice and freedom. Christians must be concerned with the dispossessed – the young, the black, the poor, and women, that is, those denied land, denied power, denied place or voice in history (Ex 2:23-25; 1 Ki 12:4). Spiritual Christianity, by refusing to face land question, has served to sanction existing inequities. These challenges of Brueggemann surely deserve positive responses and concrete actions, as many unjust acts were and are being committed on and for land. Thousands of people in the world have been and are denied their divine right to have a place that they can call home.

2.3.2. Suzanne Boorer

In her work, which is rather technical and repetitive, Boorer extensively analyzes the texts that speak of the promise of land as an oath. Her main purpose is to contribute a new hypothesis to the Pentateuchal scholarship, especially on theories concerning the formation of the Pentateuch. Concerned with how an interpreter will face limitations if he or she sticks only to a synchronic approach, she wants to present a case for the diminishing diachronic approach. For Boorer, to ignore the diachronic dimension of a text is potentially do to a disservice to the interpretation of

²⁰ Cf. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 190.

the present text, as any preconceptions the interpreter may have of the diachronic formation of the text will affect his or her interpretation of the text in its present form.²¹

By analyzing and situating the redactional levels of the land oath texts, Boorer hopes to be able to situate the redactional levels of the Pentateuchal sources, as she thinks the land oath texts functioned as a key or basis for the formation of the Pentateuch. This will further illuminate the motif and nature of land oath texts in their different levels (contexts). In so doing, she approaches her study by way of comparing and contrasting the land oath texts in Exodus-Numbers and their parallel texts in Deuteronomy.

Boorer then analyzes the five primary land oath texts (see table 3 below), which use the verb נשבע (oath) in the contexts of the exodus (Ex 13:5, 11), Sinai (Ex 32:13; 33:1), and wilderness/conquest traditions (Nu 14:23a; 32:11). She studies them in their literary contexts of the Dtr and Exodus-Numbers, and compares them with their parallel texts in Deuteronomy.

Table 3: Primary land oath texts

<i>Primary oath texts</i>	<i>Dtr Contexts</i>	<i>Ex-Nu contexts</i>	<i>Parallels in Dt</i>	<i>Other parallels</i>
1. Exodus : Ex 13:5,11	Ex 13:3-16	Ex 12:1-13:16	6:7-9 ; 11:18-21; 15:19-23; 16:1-17	Ex 23:14-18; 34:18-20, 25; Lev 23:4ff; Nu 8:16-18; 18:15-18; 28:16-25; Jos 5:10-12; 2 Ki 23:21-23; Eze 45:18-20
2. Sinai: Ex 32:13	Ex 32:7-14	Ex 32-34*	9:7-10:11	Nu 14:11b-23a
Ex 33:1	Ex 33:1-3	Ex 32-34*	9:7-10:11	
3. Wilderness/conquest: Nu 14:23a	Nu 14:11b-23a	Nu 13-14	1:19-46; 9:23	Ex 32:9-14; 32-34* (34:6-7)
Nu 32:11	Nu 32:7-15	Nu 32**	1:19-46; 9:23	Nu 13-14 (14:11b- 23a); Jos 14:6-14

* Ex 32-34 denotes the basic narrative of Ex 32-34 which comprises Ex 32:1-6, 15-20, 21-24, 30-34, 35; 34:1-8, 10, 17-23, 25-28, (29a).

** Parallels to Nu 32, the basic narrative of Nu 32:1, 5-6, 16-27, but not to Nu 32:7-15, are found in Dt 3:18-20; Jos 1:12-18.

Boorer also analyzes other נשבע (oath) texts such as Genesis 22:16; 24:7; 26:3; 50:24; Exodus 32:13; Numbers 11:12; 14:16, 23; Deuteronomy 1:8, 35; 6:10, 18, 23; 11:9, 21; 19:8; 26:3, 15; 28:11; 30:20; 31:7, 20, 21, 23; 34:4; Joshua 1:6; 5:6; 21:43; Judges 2:1; Jeremiah 11:5; 32:22. When the linguistic expressions for the oath of the land are analyzed, Boorer realizes that the formulation of the oath of the land texts in Deuteronomy is surprisingly consistent, with only a narrow range of variation, compared with a multitude of linguistic variations outside Deuteronomy. The formulation that recurs in Deuteronomy, which Boorer calls the “standard

²¹ S Boorer, *The Promise of Land as Oath*, 2.

formulation in Deuteronomy” (SF-Dt), is: “The land [הארץ/הארמה] which [אשר] (Yahweh/Yahweh your God/he) swore [נשבע] to (your [s. or pl.]/its/their/our) fathers [אבות],” often with “to give” [להתן] plus and indirect object added to this (Dt 1:8, 35; 6:10, 18, 23; 7:13; 8:1; 10:11; 11:9, 21; 26:3; 28:11; 30:20; 31:7, 20, [21, 23]; exceptions, Dt 19:8; 26:15; 34:4). Texts outside Deuteronomy that conform to the SF-Dt are Numbers 11:12; 14:16, 23; (Ex 13:5); Joshua 1:6; 5:6; 21:43; possibly Judges 2:1. Texts that do not conform to the SF-Dt are Genesis 50:24; Exodus 33:1; Numbers 32:11; Deuteronomy 34:4 (also Ge 24:7; 26:3; Ex 32:13 and possibly Ge 22:16, and Ex 13:11; Dt 19:8; 26:15). The use of נתן in the perfect/imperfect in the non-SF-Dt texts is the primary feature that distinguishes it from the SF-Dt texts, which do not use it. From the designation of the recipients they can also be generally distinguished. For non-SF-Dt, the recipients of the land oath are לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב/ישראל (to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel) and/or זרע (seed/descendants), where as in SF-Dt they are אבות (fathers).

Using a number of criteria including language, developing trends in the interrelationships of elements, and trends in the development and joining of the forms, Boorer comes to the following conclusion. Somewhere along the line of Wellhausen (see n. 1 above), she believes that the Pentateuchal formation was a complex process of many stages, with most of the Dtr texts in Genesis-Numbers, though at different levels, being earlier than Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy, in its various levels, too, represents a further stage in a gradual and many-leveled Dtr expansion of earlier text.

The Dtr texts in Exodus 32:7-14; Numbers 14:11b-23a, though at different levels from each other, are earlier than, and influenced, the shaping of the texts of Deuteronomy 9-10 and 1:19-2:1, as they are on each other. Among the texts analyzed, Exodus 32:13 & 33:1 are the earliest levels (earlier than the Deuteronomistic levels of Dt 9:7-10:11), followed by Numbers 14:23a (earlier than Deuteronomy), Deuteronomy 10:11, 1:35, and Numbers 32:11 (post-Deuteronomy) respectively. Exodus 13:3-16, and thus 13:5,11, is earlier than Deuteronomy 16:1-7(8), and therefore can be designated loosely as pre-Deuteronomistic.²² In reaching this conclusion, Boorer is basically proposing here that Deuteronomy 9-10 and 1:19-2:1 use (are influenced by) the Dtr land oath texts of Exodus 32:13 & 33:1 and Numbers 14:23a respectively. This is different from the DH school’s view, which hypothesizes that the DH uses the Deuteronomy as its prologue.

²² For example, in analyzing the interrelation of elements for Ex 13:5, 11, Boorer identifies the following stages. Stage 1: Exodus motif with unleavened bread and firstborn (Ex 34:18-20; 13:3-16 that was added to Ex 12:29-39); stage 2: Exodus motif with passover and unleavened bread loosely linked. Firstborn become isolated (Dt 16:1-8; Ex 12:21-27 that was added to Ex 12:29-39 and 13:3-16; Dt 15:19-23); and stage 3: Exodus motif with passover &

Boorer does not attempt to precisely date the Pentateuchal sources, and for that matter, the land oath texts. Nevertheless, she highlights the historical situations that she believes prompted the formulation of the land oath texts.

The promise of land in Exodus 13:5, 11 in its narrative context Exodus 13:3-16 gives assurance that the people will possess the promised land because it is Yahweh's promise by oath. Nevertheless, it also obliges the people to keep the appropriate laws in the land (including the Passover) to commemorate their exodus them to remember Yahweh's saving hands. These texts may have been composed at a time when the people were forgetting the roots of their identity as a nation because of their wandering life in the exodus and/or failing to celebrate the related rites.

Exodus 32:13 & 33:1 in their narrative context (Ex 32-34) records that apostate people can still possess the land and continue as a nation because of Yahweh's promise of it by an oath to their ancestors on which basis Moses petition for the forgiveness of the people's sin was answered. These texts may have been composed when apostasy was rife and yet the people were not suffering any negative effects but rather enjoying life in the land as those for whom the land promise has been fulfilled. Based on the making of a golden calf, it could possibly be a time when the whole nation, and in particular the North, was enjoying a time of prosperity, for example under the Omrides. Or, alternatively, it could have been composed later when the issue of how the North, given their apostasy, came to possess the land at all was being pondered.

Numbers 14:11b-23a in its context is concerned with those who would receive the land and who would not. Those who trust in Yahweh will receive his gift of the land, and those who do not trust him will not receive it. It is basically affirming that someone will receive the gift of the land (Caleb who wholly follows Yahweh with his descendants and the future generation), even though most of that generation of the nation will not because of their faithlessness, for the land oath to the fathers still stands. Since the figure of Caleb is associated with Hebron, these texts may have originated in the South to portray the South in a positive light in contrast to the rest of the nation. This points to a period after the fall of the North but when Judah was still relatively safe. Thus the continued possession of the land for Judah was assumed and the North was assured that a future generation could receive the gift of the land again on the basis of Yahweh's oath if they trusted in Yahweh. This leads to the time of Hezekiah.

unleavened bread, one unified festival. Firstborn in a different context (Lev 23:5-8; Nu 28:16-25; Ex 12:1-20, 28, 40-41; 13:1-2; Nu 3:11-13, 40-51; 8:14-18; 18:15-18) (Boorer, *The Promise of the Land as Oath*, 189).

Deuteronomy 9-10 speaks of how the nation possesses the land. It is not because they are righteous and/or strong but because of Yahweh's free choice to allow them to have it in spite of their rebellion. This suggests a time when the Israelites had become proud of and self-righteous in their possession and prosperity in the land, which points to the time of Josiah's reform whereby Yahweh chose to renew his covenant.

An appropriate backdrop for Deuteronomy 1:19-2:1 could well be the exilic time. This assessment is based on the fact that the text is concerned to show how one generation forfeited the gift of the land originally intended for them because of its rebelliousness against the command of Yahweh, but that the next generation will instead possess the land as Yahweh's gift.

Numbers 32:7-11 (12) 13-15 is concerned with one subgroup within the nation that threatened the fulfillment of Yahweh's land promise for their whole generation by not crossing the Jordan to the land. The oath of this text functions to show that the behavior of a generation, or more precisely a group within it that leads to the forfeiting of their opportunity to possess the land in fulfillment of the promise does not negate the promise which still remains to be fulfilled. This situation points to the post-exilic period when the people were divided as to whether or not they should return to the land.

Finally, although Boorer claims to have successfully unlocked the relative redactional levels of the Pentateuchal sources by using the redactional levels of the land oath texts as a key, she ambiguously concludes as far as the fulfillment of the promise of land is concerned:

The Mosaic generation was precisely that generation portrayed as moving towards the land, arriving at its edge, but never actually entering the land. Thus the continual projection of reflection on the issue of the oath of the land and its fulfillment back into the Mosaic generation means that those composing these texts are writing always as if the oath of the land has not been fulfilled for them. But presumably, at least at the time of the emergence of some of these reflections, those responsible for their composition were actually living in the land. This means that the reality of their life in the land is not commensurate with what is conceived of as the fulfillment of the oath of the land, the "land" itself must be symbolic of something more than simply a piece of territory or geographical location. But what is the wider reality symbolized by the "land"? And what does Yahweh's oath of the land and its fulfillment actually mean? Perhaps the experience of life with which these texts constantly struggle is akin to that which is captured in the words of T. S. Eliot so many centuries later:²³

In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession.
In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go by the way in which you are not.
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.²⁴

²³ Boorer, *The Promise of Land as Oath*, 450-451.

²⁴ T S Eliot, "Four Quarters (East Coker)" in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S.Eliot* (London: Book Club Association, 1977), 181; quoted in Boorer, *ibid*.

2.3.3. Moshe Weinfeld

First, Weinfeld studies the *Sitz im Leben* of the land promise narratives. He interestingly finds many striking similarities between the patriarchal narratives of land promise and settlement and the Greek foundation and colonization stories. He identifies at least seven typological parallels between the promise of land to the patriarchs and the Greek foundation stories: A man receiving a divine promise to leave a great civilization to become the father of a nation that will rule the world;²⁵ a long gap between the actual foundation and the migration of the ancestor;²⁶ the promise becoming at stake;²⁷ the ancestor being back projected as a pious man with whom the contemporary pious ruler shares likeness;²⁸ the need of the ancestral gods to go (be transferred) with them to the newly founded sites;²⁹ the importance of and reverence for the burial place of the founder;³⁰ and the tug of war between the two possible settlements - Canaan versus Aram in the patriarchal narratives and Rome versus Carthage in *Aeneid*.³¹

Weinfeld also discovers further striking similarities between the Israelite patriarchal settlement pattern and the Greek colonization. Citing I Malkin,³² Weinfeld observes that the Greeks preserved the concept of *tritopatères* (three ancestors) connected with the hero cult in the Greek settlements. Special *heroons* were dedicated for the *tritopatères* and, as eponymous ancestors, they were the objects of special veneration, invoked in worship as the protectors of the colony. Similarly the three Israelite patriarchs were invoked in time of crisis (Ex 32:13; Lev 26:42; Dt 9:22) and had a renowned tomb in Hebron (Ge 23). Here again, Weinfeld isolates at least nine

²⁵ Aeneas leaves famous Troy and stays for a while in Carthage, which later becomes Rome's great enemy; finally, his son Ascanius reaches Lavinium, and later his son gets to Alba-Longa. His descendents reach Rome, which will rule the world (Aen 1:57ff; 1:286ff; 3:97; 4:229ff; 6:775ff); Similarly Abraham leaves Ur of the Chaldeans (Mesopotamia), stays for a while in Haran (Aram), which later becomes Israel's enemy, and reaches Canaan, the land of promise, out of which his descendents will rule other peoples (Ge 12:3; 17:5; 27:29; 49:10) (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 4).

²⁶ Abraham was told that 400 to 430 years would pass before his descendents possess the land (Ge 12; 13; cf. Ex 12:41). Similarly, Aeneas is told, in the prophecy of Jupiter (1:270ff), that 333 years will pass before the birth of the twins, ie, before the foundation of Rome (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 6-7).

²⁷ Jacob, when endangered by Esau's advancing army, he prays: "Save me from my brother Esau; else I fear he may come and strike me down ... yet, you have said ... I will make your offspring as the sand of the sea" (Ge 32:12-13). Similarly, when Aeneas was endangered by the sea storms Venus intervened on his behalf and prayed to Jupiter: "O you ... who (rule) the world of men and gods, what crime ... could my Aeneas have done ... Surely it was your promise ... that from them the Romans were to rise ... rulers to hold the sea and all lands beneath their sway, what thought ... has turned you?" (1:229ff) (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 9-10).

²⁸ Abraham and David are depicted much alike as pious men (Abraham - Ge 17:1; 22:8, 12; 24:40; 26:5; David - 1 Ki 3:6; 9:4; 14:8; 15:3; Ps 132:1; 2 Ch 6:42). It was these moral-religious qualities that made Abraham and David worthy of god's promise for land and kingdom respectively. In *Aeneid*, the image of pious Aeneas is a back projection from pious Augustus (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 10-11).

²⁹ *Aeneid* 2:293ff; 3:147ff; Camillus 20:6 cf.; cf Ge 31:19, 34; Dionys. Hal 1:67:2; 1:69:3; cf. Jdg 18:4-16 (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 11-13).

³⁰ Cf. Ge 23; 24:32; 33:19; 47:30; 50:5, 25; Ex 14:19; Josh 24:32; cf Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1:54:1; 1:64:3; Plutarch: Theseus 36; Herodotus 1:67-68 (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 14-15).

³¹ Cf. Ge 30 & 31; *Aeneid* 4:219-37; 4:554-70 (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 15-18).

³² Cf. I Malkin, *Religion and Colonization in Ancient Greece* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 206-212 (cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 21).

similarities between the pattern of Israelite conquest and settlement and Greek colonization. In both cases, there was an inquiry at the central shrine to know the divine will;³³ seeking of a divine will for further actions through priestly guidance;³⁴ success of the settlers depending on fulfilling divine obligations;³⁵ veneration of the founder's tomb;³⁶ naming the land (of new settlement) after the eponymous ancestor (of the tribe);³⁷ dividing the land equally by lot;³⁸ divine promise of the land to be their eternal inheritance;³⁹ setting up stones (Israel)/erecting pillars of stone and monuments (Greek) at the conclusion of their journey;⁴⁰ and the priority of building an altar on the arrival at a new settlement.⁴¹ Various ethnic groups followed these patterns in their new settlements after the destruction of Troy and the collapse of the kingdoms of the eastern Mediterranean.

There is also similarity between the tradition about the founder-leader in the Israelite settlement and Greek colonization. In the Greek tradition, there were three stages in the development of the image of the founder. First, he is the leader of the colonizing group, second, the builder of the city and its temple, and in the third stage, he appears as legislator and administrator concerned with the welfare of the settlement. In Israel, though Gilgal (Ephraimite or rather Josephite) and Shechem (Benjamite) traditions each claims to belong to a Joshua tradition, neither seems originally connected with him as they were already important places by the time Joshua was drawn to these two sites – one as the point of crossing of the Jordan and the other as the central city of Mount Ephraim. In the original Israelite (Shilonite) tradition, Joshua was the founder of a

³³ In Greece the oracle at Delphi; in Israel the shrine at Shiloh (Herodotus, 5:43; Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle* (n.11), 441; Jdg 1:1-2; 18:5-6) (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 26-27).

³⁴ Joshua was subject to divine law as mediated by Eleazar, the priest (Nu 26:1, 63; 27:19-22; 32:2, 28; Jos 21:1; 22:13, 30, 32) as Onymastos the "seer" accompanied Battos, the founder of the settlement (Greek inscriptions of Cyrene, n. 16) (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 27-28).

³⁵ For Israelite their obedience to the law of God given through Moses and similarly for the Greeks their observance of the laws of Apollo (compare Cyrene Stele 1 with Num 19; Stele 3 with Lev 12:1-8; 15:16-18; Stele 5 with Ex 30:10; Lev 16:18 Eze 43:18-27; Stele 7-10 with Lev 27; Stele 17-19 with Num 35; Dt 19:1-13; Lev 18:28; Aeschines 2:115; 3:107-122 with Dt 27-28; Jdg 20-21) (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 28-32).

³⁶ Nearby the grave of venerated Battos, the founder of Cyrene, in the center of the city were the graves of Onymastos, the "seer" from Delphi and the *tritopateres*. Similarly, "All the graves were cleared out, apart from those of the king and the prophet ... the graves of the house of David and of Huldah the prophetess were in Jerusalem and no one ever touched them." (Tos. Baba Batra 1:11) (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 32-34).

³⁷ Compare Nu 32:41-42 with Plato, *Laws* 704a; Nu 32:28 with Herodotus, 4:147, 4 (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 34-35).

³⁸ Cf. Nu 26:56; Jos 18:1-10; Plato, *Laws* 745b (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 35-36).

³⁹ 'The most surprising analogy is between the promise of land to the Greek settlers by Apollo and to the Israelite settlers by YHWH. Apollo not only directs the division of the land by means of the casting of the lot in his shrine, but also promises the land with an oath to the settlers. Thus Callimachus, a poet born in Cyrene, sings: "Apollo swore that he would establish the land of Cyrene, the oath of Apollo is valid forever" (Hymn to Apollo 5)' (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 36).

⁴⁰ Cf. Dt 27:1-3,8; Jos 3-4; 8:30-35; cf. Strabo 3:171; Herodotus 2:102-3 (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 36-37).

⁴¹ Joshua built an altar on Mount Ebal outside Shechem (Jos 8:31; Dt 27:6-7). Similarly the first Greek settlers of Sicily built an altar to Apollo at Naxos in eighth century BC (Thucydides 1:4:6) (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 37-39).

particular settlement. He established it, lived there and was buried there (Jos 19:50; 24:29-30; Jdg 2:9). In the course of time, on account of his particular success (Jos 8:30-35; 11:1-15; 10:1-14; 17:14-18), his name became associated with the central city in the area and its shrine, and finally he became identified as the founder and legislator of the whole nation. (Jos 5; 6:17; 1 Sa 21:2).

Despite his interesting discovery of these striking similarities, Weinfeld confesses the main problem he confronts; the Greek stories revolve around founding new cities⁴² while the Patriarchal stories focus on founding a new nation in a new land. On the question of a possible influence of either tradition on the other, Weinfeld does not give an explicit answer. If we follow a low chronology (the time of Solomon as around 850 BC),⁴³ the Greek foundation stories and the patriarchal land promise narratives seem to belong to the same period.⁴⁴ Although Weinfeld's discovery of striking similarities between a divine promise of land among the Greeks and Israelites is interesting, he does not answer an important theological question: Was it the same God who promised land to both the Greeks and the Israelites? Whether he takes the promise as historical or just a "mythic" tradition, he does not elucidate either. For the settlement, he nevertheless presents the Israelite traditions as belonging to a much earlier period than that of the Greeks.

Next, Weinfeld studies the *borders of the promised land*. There are two or rather three views: the P view, the DH view and the second temple period Rabbinic view. Weinfeld discovers that all the three sources represent different boundaries. The priestly view, which originated in Shiloh delineates the borders "from Lebo-hamath until the wadi of Egypt"⁴⁵ (Nu 34; 1 Ki 8:16; Am

⁴² When asked by Socrates what people love to hear more than anything else, Hippias replies, "They are very fond of hearing about the genealogies of heroes and men and the foundation of cities in ancient times" (Greater Hippias 4:285 [quoted in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 41]).

⁴³ Cf. E Noordt, "The Debate Between Low and High Chronology in the Archaeology of Palestine," Paper presented at the Post Graduate Old Testament Seminar at the University of Stellenbosch, March 2001.

⁴⁴ According to F Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin-Leiden, 1923) 2 B. no. 556, F 47 (1923) and G Bunnens, *L'expansion phénicienne en Méditerranée* (Brussels, Rome, 1979), 127-28, though Carthage was believed to be founded in 814 BC, tradition related its foundation to Azoros (=Zor) and Carchedon (= Carthage) of the late thirteenth century BC as told by Philistos of Syracuse in the first half of the fourth century BC. In the same pattern H Donner and W Röllig, eds., *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften (=KAI)* (Wiesbaden, 1969), 26A, col. 1, 16; 2, 15; 3, 2. cf. M Astour, *Hellensoemitaica* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 53 ff. and F Bron, *Recherches sur les inscriptions phéniciennes de Karatepe* (Geneva/Paris, 1979), 172 ff. assess that Mopsos, the eponymous hero of "the house of Mpš" in Cilicia, belong to the second millenium BC; the actual ethnic existence, however, of Mopsos's people (= the Danunians in the Karatepe inscriptions) is attested in the first millennium (cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 20).

⁴⁵ Citing Y Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, rev. ed., A F Rainey, ed. [Jerusalem, 1979], 67-71, Weinfeld (*The Promise of the Land*, 53) identifies Lebo-hamat as Labweh, near the sources of the Orontes south of the city of Kadesh, that serves as a kind of natural border in the middle of the valley between the kingdom of the Hittites and the Egyptian empire, and in a later period the southern border of the province of Hamath extended there (Eze 47:15; 48:1). As for the Wadi of Egypt, he moves away from a general identification of it as Wadi al-Arish, and in line with N Na'aman, "The Wadi of Egypt and the Assyrian Policy on the Egyptian Border," *Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 3 (1975), 138-58 (Hebrew), Weinfeld (*The Promise of*

6:14; Jos 13:2-5; Jdg 3:3). This excludes the Transjordan south of the lake of Kinneret. This is in contradiction with the DH borders, “from the River Euphrates to the River of Egypt,” that includes the Transjordan (Ge 15:18; compare Ex 23:31; Dt 1:7; 11:24; Ps 72:8).

The priestly borders: Weinfeld in both his earlier work⁴⁶ and the present one⁴⁷ seems to be of the opinion that, although the priestly borders might have followed the thirteenth-century BC Egyptian borders of the Canaan province that excludes the Transjordan, it is more likely that they represent the original borders of the promised land. The ancient tradition itself firmly associates the realization of the promise with the crossing of the Jordan (Jos 3-7). The crossing of the Jordan from Transjordan to Cisjordan signals the point at which the commandments specific to the Land of Israel become binding (Num 33:51-52; 35:10). The manna the Israelites ate in the desert stopped after the crossing of the Jordan (Ex 16:35; Jos 5:12). The circumcision of the Israelites was conducted upon their arrival in the land of Canaan, shortly before they celebrated the first Passover in the land. This took place after crossing of the Jordan to Gilgal in the west (Jos 5:2-11). The stones were to be erected after the passage of Jordan (Dt 27:2-3) and the arrival of the angel, “I have come,” was celebrated only after the crossing of the Jordan (Jos 5:14; Jdg 2:1-4). For the priestly view, the settlement in the Transjordan in Number 32, however, is apologetic, attempting to justify the settlement of the Gadites and Reubenites. That they would settle there only after they fought with the rest of the tribes in the Cisjordan clearly implies that the area is not a part of the promised land. The crossing of the Jordan clearly marks the beginning of the conquest of the land of Canaan.

The DH borders: A more inclusive view adopted by the DH, which sees the beginning of the conquest not in the passage of the Jordan but in the passage of the river Arnon in Transjordan (Dt 1-3), presents the borders of the promised land as “from the River Euphrates to the River of

Land, 53-54) identifies it with the brook of Besor south of Gaza by claiming textual supports such as Ge. 10:19: “The Canaanite territory extended from Sidon ... as far as Gaza”; also Jos 10:41: “from Kadesh-Barne’a as far as Gaza” and 1 Ki 5:4: “For he controlled the whole region west of the Euphrates, from Tiphseh to Gaza.” Nevertheless, he agrees that there is no doubt that small settlements existed in the wilderness south and southwest of Gaza (the wilderness of Sinai). So in the same vein with the Israelite and Assyrian historiographers, Weinfeld’s priestly borders include the territories south of Gaza. This view suggests the utilization of natural features as border markers: a long wadi like Wadi al-Arish, or “the Shihor,” which is the eastern branch of the Nile (Jos.13:10; 1 Ch. 13:5). The Israelites could well view regions of the wilderness in which they had settled as part of their land since the Egyptians themselves did not view the Sinai wilderness as belonging to them. See also, N Na’aman, “The Inheritances of the Cis-Jordanian Tribes of Israel and the ‘Land that yet remaineth,’” *Eretz-Israel* 16 (1982), 152-58 [Hebrew] = *Borders and Districts in Biblical Historiography* [Jerusalem, 1986], 27-34 (Hebrew). For further discussion, see B Mazar, “Lebo-hamath-the Northern Border of Canaan,” in S Ahituv and B Levine, eds., *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies* (Jerusalem, 1986), 189-202, orig. pub. in *Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society (Yediot)* 12 (1946), 91-102 (Hebrew); R de Vaux, “Le Pays de Canaan,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1968), 23-29 (cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 55-64).

⁴⁶ M Weinfeld, “The Tradition of Inheritance of the Tribes of Israel in Canaan: the Model and Its Nature,” *Cathedra* 44 (June/July 1987), 12-13 (Hebrew) (cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 58).

⁴⁷ Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 55-58.

Egypt.” Weinfeld attributes this to a later tradition. He believes that these borders were the work of the Dtr historiographer drawn “imperial” boundaries of the conquering King David’s empire⁴⁸ that reached from Ezion Geber on the eastern arm of the red sea to the Euphrates River.

The second temple Rabbinic view: The third and last one is represented by the Rabbinic literature (B T Arakhin 32b) concerning the borders of the holy land. Unlike the borders of those who came from Egypt [גבול עילי מצרים], the borders of those who came from Babylonia [גבול עילי בבל], sanctified for eternity (Shevi’it Mishnah 6:1), excludes the region of Samaria and the coastal area settled by foreigners that are not considered holy.

Then, Weinfeld discusses *reality and ideology in the process of the conquest and settlement*. Three different hypotheses emerged. The first is the view held by W F Albright⁴⁹ and his school who advocate the biblical claims of the massive invasions of Canaan by the Israelites. They claim that their hypothesis has strong archaeological supports that show the destruction of the Canaanite cities in the thirteenth century BC.⁵⁰

The second view comes from scholars of the Alt-Noth⁵¹ school who claim that the settlement of the tribes of Israel in the land of Israel occurred largely without battle. The Israelites moved in camps to the uninhabited areas⁵² of the hill country of the Galilee, Ephraim, and Judah. Only after the Israelite tribes had become rooted in their settlements and were beginning to expand did they confront the inhabitants of Canaanite cities and become drawn into battle, as in the war with Sisera (Jdg 4-5).

The third and last is the view held by the Mendenhall-Gottwald⁵³ school that suggests that a peasant rebellion occurred in the land of Canaan in the period of settlement. They believe that

⁴⁸ For the extent of David’s empire, see chapter 3 n. 39.

⁴⁹ W F Albright, “The Israelite Conquest of Canaan in the Light of Archaeology,” *BASOR* 74 (1939), 11-23. Canaanite cities – Lachish, Debir, Eglon (Tell el-Hesi), and Bethel - were destroyed in the thirteenth-century BC. In analyzing Albright, Weinfeld (*The Promise of the Land*, 101-104) challenges that some cities mentioned here were never destroyed.

⁵⁰ The excavation of Hazor by Y Yadin, *Hazor* (London: Schweich Lectures, 1970), shows that the city was destroyed at the end of the thirteenth-century BC. Weinfeld agrees that destruction of cities did occur during this period (though he does question the identification of some cities). He, however, cautions that it might have come about by the Egyptian kingdom, by the Sea Peoples, or by Canaanites fighting among themselves. Nomadic Israelite tribes did not possess such power to destroy strong fortified cities (cf., Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 101-104).

⁵¹ A Alt, “Die Landnahme der Israeliten in Palästina,” *Kleine Schriften* 1 (Munich, 1953), 89-125; M Noth, *Das Buch Josua*, HAT²; (Tübingen, 1953); M Weippert, *Die Landnahme der israelitischen Stämme in der neuen wissenschaftlichen Diskussion* (Göttingen, 1961), 14-51 (cited in Weinfeld 1993, *The Promise of Land*, 104-106).

⁵² During this period, Canaan was largely made up of city-states and so the vast hill areas were uninhabited.

⁵³ G Mendenhall, “The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine,” *BA* 25 (1962), 66-87 = *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of Biblical Tradition* (Baltimore, 1973), 1-31, 174 ff.; N K Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (New York, 1979); M Buber, *Kingship of God* (trans. from German; London, 1964) (cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 107 ff.)

this was not a massive invasion of nomadic (Israelite) tribes into the land of Canaan but a radical social change in the land among the native Canaanites (including pre-exodus native Israelites in Canaan) themselves. The Israelites seized this golden opportunity and overran the cities.

Weinfeld seems to be in the opinion that one view does not exclude the other. The Alt-Noth school too claims archaeological support. According to M Kochavi⁵⁴ and I Finkelstein,⁵⁵ during the twelfth century BC a great number of settlements suddenly appeared in the hill country of Ephraim and Manasseh and of Judah during an era when Canaanite settlements were flourishing in the land.

He also confidently says that all the Israelite settlers in question did not come out from Egypt. Only a few Israelites came out of Egypt. This group joined the tribes of Israel, who dwelt autochthonously in the land of Canaan without ever descending to Egypt (Ge 15; 25; 36; 38; 1 Ch 2: 1, 8, 25, 27, 43, 47; 4:21-25; Jdg 1; Nu 31:8; 32:12; Jos 9:7, 17; 11: 19; 13:21; 14:6-7). Joshua and his Ephraimites were native to the land of Canaan and did not come out of Egypt. Many confrontations with the Canaanite cities had already occurred before those who came out of Egypt reached Canaan. Weinfeld also speaks of the assimilation of the native Israelites and other Canaanite tribes into the mainstream Israel, as was with the case of Calebites, Kenezites, and Yerachmelites (see above Scripture references) who were assimilated into the tribe of Judah through symbiosis. Weinfeld's interesting hypotheses (especially from a Jewish scholar) – that the Israelite settlement in Canaan was not by way of massive conquest; that only very few people came out of Egypt; and that Joshua and Caleb were not among those who came out of Egypt – are in stark oppositions to the traditional interpretation. These questions are beyond the scope of this thesis, so we will leave them here for future research.

Weinfeld also finds textual ambiguities and ethical dilemmas readers encounter on the question: who fought the Canaanites, was it God or the Israelites? On the one hand, it is God who נָרַשׁ (expels), הוֹרִישׁ (dispossesses), שָׁלַח (sends away), כָּלַח (annihilates), חָדַף (thrusts out), נָשַׁל (drives out), הָאֵבִיד (destroys), הִשְׁמִיד (exterminates), and חָכְרִית (cut off) the Canaanites;⁵⁶ and on the other, it is the Israelites who are commanded to do this.⁵⁷ Weinfeld does not attempt to

⁵⁴ M Kochavi, "The Israelite Settlement in Canaan in the Light of Archaeological Survey," *Proceedings of the International Congress on Biblical Archaeology, 1-10 April 1984* (Jerusalem, 1985), 54-60 (cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 105).

⁵⁵ I Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem, 1988) (cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 105).

⁵⁶ Cf. In legal codes: Ex 23:29; 34:11, 24; Lev 18:24; Dt 4:38; 6:19; 7:1, 22, 23; 8:20; 9:3, 5; 11:23; 31:3,4; in nonlegal sources: Dt 33:27; Jdg 2:3; 6:9; 11:23-24; Am 2:9; Ps 78:55; 80:9; 1 Ch 17:21; 2 Ch 20:7. The Hebrew words here and in other places are mine; Weinfeld uses transliterations.

⁵⁷ Cf. Legal codes: Ex 23:31; Nu 33:52, 55; Dt 7:22, 16; 20:17; nonlegal sources: Jdg 1:1-2:5; Ps 106:34-35).

enumerate the ambiguities. I believe this is to be understood dialectically. Although the Israelites conquered the land by the help of Yahweh, they did not just stay passive; they played their part in fighting the battle, of course, under the direction and will of Yahweh.

Weinfeld then analyzes the two competing biblical accounts on who the real conqueror was, Joshua or Caleb. He believes it as a kind of leading role dispute between the two dominant tribes - Joseph-Benjamin versus the house of Judah. The house of Joseph-Benjamin tradition makes Joshua, the leader of the tribe of Ephraim, the one who led the campaign (Jos 2-11); likewise, the Judahite tradition attributes it to Caleb the Kenezite (Jdg 1). Weinfeld's answer to this is that, different local settlement traditions, independent of one another, were later combined by the Dtr to make a unified national tradition of conquest under the leadership of Joshua. But Kaufmann rightly sees no contradiction between Caleb and Joshua stories. He asserts that all the Canaanites were conquered first by the Israelites (Caleb included) under the leadership of Joshua although the Canaanites remained dwelling in its cities after the conquests. Caleb did as well conquer independently later as the Anakims returned to Hebron after Joshua's war.⁵⁸ In Judges 1 itself, Weinfeld's reference to Caleb's conquest, it is clearly stated that Caleb was not the only conqueror. Verses 22-26 speak about the house of Joseph and its conquests.

On the question of the total annihilation of the pre-Israelite Canaanites as reported in Joshua 2-11, Weinfeld convincingly presents a case against it by analyzing the two introductory views represented in the book of Judges concerning the presence of the Canaanites in the land. According to the older tradition (Jdg 1:1-2:5), he says, the sin of the Israelites during this period was the not expelling the Canaanites in the promised land and intermarrying with them and yearning after their gods (Jdg 3:5-6).

Two views are presented as regards the reason for not driving them out: *inability* (Jos 15:63; 17:12) or *unwillingness* (Jdg 1:21, 27). Weinfeld suggests that the *inability* was the older tradition which the editor of Judges change it to the *unwillingness* so as to emphasize the Israelites sin of failing to expel the Canaanites, even after they had had the ability to do so (Jdg 1:28, 33, 35). In contrast, because of its ideological total annihilation approach (see below), the Deuteronomistic editor ignored the historical prologue (Jdg 1:1-2:5) and wrote his own prologue (Jdg 2:6ff) that presents Israel's sin during the period of judges as not the non-expulsion of the Canaanites (since God had totally חָרַם [exterminated] them through Joshua, there was none to dispossess), but their cleaving to their neighbors and adopting their ways, even to the extent of

⁵⁸ Cf. Y Kaufmann, *Commentary on the Book of Judges* (Jerusalem, 1959), 175 (cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 100-101).

worshipping of their gods. The Canaanite thorn (the presence of the Canaanites in the promised land as a test for Israel), according to the DH, therefore, was a punishment from God because of their sin mentioned above. If the ensuing generations would not follow the customs of the nations around them, they would be worthy of conquering the remaining land. But they did not pass the test, so the remaining land in Lebanon and the Philistine coast was forfeited forever (Jdg 2:20-21; 3:1-4).

Weinfeld attributes the texts on the total ban or extermination [חרם] to a seventh century BC Deuteronomistic edition. The older sources, he affirms, speak about גרש (expelling) (Ex 23:20-33; 34:11-16) the Canaanites or הוריש (dispossessing) (Nu 33:50-56) them only, they never speak about חרם (exterminating) (Dt 7:2; 20:16-17) them. A total חרם (Dt 20:16) was not a historical act; it was never carried out. The Canaanites were neither completely expelled nor exterminated as may be deduced from Judges 1:21-23 and 1 Kings 9:20-21. Even till the time of David, the Canaanite cities on the coast and in the valleys maintained their status as independent cities. Weinfeld rightly asserts that the genuine חרם was an ad hoc institution that applied to specific cases of severe enmity involving fighting, such as at Arad (Nu 21:1-3), Jericho (Jos 6:17), and Amalek (1 Sa 15). The total חרם of the Canaanites was, therefore, a later development of a Deuteronomistic utopian historiography that ascribes the conquest to Joshua. Even then, the Dtr-editor was aware of the fact that Joshua did not conquer all the promised lands (to the Euphrates). So he put in Joshua's mouth that "the remaining land" would be conquered by the coming generations if they followed God's way and obeyed his commandments (Jos 11:17; 12:7; 21:41).

Finally, we will study what Weinfeld says about *the nature, conditions, and purpose* of the promise of land. Weinfeld discusses the nature of the promise of land by analyzing two land covenants of the Old Testament – the Abrahamic-Davidic and the Sinaitic. The Abrahamic-Davidic covenant belonged to the grant⁵⁹ while the Sinaitic covenant was made in the form of the treaty (for discussion on the ANE covenant formulas of "Grant" and "Treaty" see chapter 3). In the former, which is unconditional and forever, it was God who committed himself to give the land to the Patriarchs and their descendants (Ge 15:6; 22:17-18; 26:5; Ex 32:13; Dt 7:8; 9:5b; 11:15), and a dynasty to David (2 Sa 7; 1 Ki 3:14; 8:18; 9:4; Ps 89:29-38), based on Abraham and David's respective past loyal services to him. Even if the Judean king sins, according to the

⁵⁹ See also D N Freedman, "Divine Commitment and Human Obligation," *Interpretation* 18 (1964), 419-31; R E Clements, *Abraham and David*, Studies in Biblical Theology, Sec. series 5 (London 1967); N Lohfink, *Die Landverheissung als Eid*, Stuttgarte Bibelstudien 28 (Stuttgart, 1967); F C Fensham, "Covenant, Promise and Expectation in the Bible," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 23 (1967), 305-22 (cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 222 ff.).

grant functions, he will be punished but God will never cancel his covenant (2 Sa 7:14-16). In contradistinction, in the Sinaitic covenant, it was the Israelites who pledged to keep the law of God, which constituted an obligation on the people, who promised to fulfill the Lord's commandments in the future (Lev 18:26-28; 20:23-24; 26; 1 Ki 2:4; 8:25; 9:4-9). With the awakening of national guilt feelings as a result of the fall of Samaria and Jerusalem and the devastating exile, the ancient unconditional concept of land promise, Weinfeld asserts, was reinterpreted by the Dtr as a conditional one. Two separate covenants, mentioned above, were joined. The Abrahamic covenant was understood as conditional on the observance of the Torah (Ge 15:16; Dt 4:26; 6:15; 11:17; 28:21, 63; 29:27; Jos 23:13, 15, 16; 1 Ki 9:7; 13:34; 14:15), and the Davidic one as conditioned by the Sinaitic covenant. Should they fail, the land would spew them out as it had been with the case of the Canaanites before them (Lev 18:28). The land thus served as a mirror to examine their relationship with God. If the people were in possession of the land, it was a sign that they were fulfilling God's will and observing this commandments; if they lost the land, it was an indication that they had violated God's covenant and neglected his commandments. All of the Old Testament historiography, therefore, is based upon this criterion: the right to possess the land.

Weinfeld then summarizes the conditions of the promise of land that Israel had repeatedly failed to observe. The DH makes the kings of Israel solely responsible for the nation's failure in obeying Yahweh in the promised land. Was the Dtr a biased anti-monarchist? With respect to the Dtr's perception of the periods of Joshua, Judges and Kings, Weinfeld challenges the commonly accepted idea that the Dtr have a negative stance vis-à-vis the monarchy. The author, at the heart of whose ideology stands the chosen king David and his city Jerusalem, Weinfeld asserts, can in no way hold an anti-monarchic bias. In Deuteronomy 17:20ff., one can see that the author was actually interested in the welfare of the monarchy and the continuation of the dynasty. The recurring expression in Judges 17-21, "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes," is in fact is a statement to exalt the monarchy. The Dtr(s) illuminated every period with a particular historiosophical light, thereby imparting to it a specific religious image:

The period of Joshua was a golden epoch in which the Israelites worshipped YHWH and therefore won brilliant victories in the area of the conquest. The period of the judges constitutes the period of apostasy, during which Israelites worshipped the gods of the surrounding peoples and were therefore "sold" into their hands to be oppressed. The period of the monarch also opened with glimmering rays: David did that which is righteous in the sight of God with all his heart and soul. In the Solomonic period, however, religious deterioration set in, as expressed in idolatry (from this perspective, the period of Solomon continues the period of judges), while in the kingship of Judah the sin was mainly the "high places."... In Judges, sin is attributed to Israel ("and they did what was evil...") whereas in Kings, it is attributed to the king alone ("and he did what was evil") as only the king is capable of enforcing the laws of the Book of Torah; *hence kings were responsible for the sins of the nation.*⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 181-182 (italics added).

In answer to the above view of the Dtr, Weinfeld affirms that from the religio-historical point of view, there was no difference at all between the periods of Moses, Joshua, Judges, and Kings. In all these periods, the Israelites committed sin, including worshipping of foreign gods (Ex 32-33; Jos 24:23; Jdg 10:6, etc; 1 Ki 11:1-10; 16:29-33). But when they cried out to YHWH and repented, then YHWH sent them deliverers (Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Gideon, Jephatah, Samuel, and David) (Jos 24:5; 1 Sa 12:11; 16:1ff).

However, later generations of the Israelite kings and people did not take heed of the prophetic rebukes and were not alarmed by the warning of losing the land. Result: exile. In retrospect, the exiled Israelites searched their hearts and found themselves guilty of sins. Besides the all-inclusive sin of the violation of the covenant, the biblical sources also speaks of some specific conditions, five of them being the most explicit ones, which the Israelites had failed to observe. They had transgressed the laws of the sabbatical and jubilee years; they had fallen into idolatry; they had practiced intermarriage with unbelieving foreigners;⁶¹ they did not follow the path of justice and righteousness;⁶² and they became slack in Sabbath observance.⁶³ Furthermore, the priestly source, which emphasizes God's presence in the land of Israel and therefore obligates the observance of the laws of holiness and purity, speaks of fornication and incest as those acts that had defiled the land (Lev 18:24 ff). The shedding of blood, adultery, theft, taking a false oath, and dishonesty are also listed among those broken conditions. These sins would result in the curse of dryness that would result in the land's not yielding its produce (Nu 35: 33-34; Lev 26:20-22; 2 Sa 1:21-22; Hos 4:2-3; Isa 24:4 ff; 33:8 ff). We will come back to these and other conditions in chapter 4.

On the purpose (or uniqueness, Weinfeld does not use the term purpose) of the promise of land, Weinfeld asserts that a divine promise of land to a specific group or tribe who go to settle in a new territory itself was not unique to Israel. For him the uniqueness of the promise of land in the Old Testament is its religious and moral ramifications. The Israelites could not live like their surrounding peoples. They were to live a life worthy of the promised land, remembering that their possession of the land of Canaan was not self-explanatory; it was an act of grace, a gift of God as the fulfillment of his promise to their fathers (Ge 15:19-21). The presence of the same

⁶¹ Cf. Jos 23:12; Eze 9:11-14; Ne 9:2.

⁶² Cf. Ge 18:19; Eze 16:49; Am 5:24-27; 6:6-7; Isa 5:12-13; Mic 3:9-12; Jer 7:5-15; 21:12-14; 22:3-5. "What is unique about classical prophecy is that it elevated social morality to the level of one of the basic conditions for the survival of the nation in its land, contrary to the popular view, which held that what God most required was cultic worship (cf. Jer. 7:21-22)" (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 198).

⁶³ Cf. Jer 17:21-27; Eze 20:12-13, 20-21; Isa 56:1-8; 58:13-14; Ne 10:32; 13:17-18. In earlier days even unscrupulous merchants would refrain from selling grain and wheat on the Sabbath (Am 8:5), but in the period of the exile the nation became negligent in observing this commandment (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 199).

divine promise of land in the Greek (and possibly in other foundation stories as well) notwithstanding, the divine promise of land in the Old Testament, I believe, is unique. Unique in the sense that the God who promised a land to the Israelites, unlike other territorial gods, revealed himself by his name by which he must be known and worshipped. He also entered a covenantal land agreement with Israel, the only God in history to have entered into such a covenant relationship with humankind (see chapter 3).

In his concluding section, Weinfeld discusses how the Israelites reinterpreted the *promise of land in the light of their experience of the exile*. Exile was avoidable had the Israelites followed God's will or had they returned to God even though they had sinned. This intense feeling of guilt, Weinfeld concludes, prevailed among the people in exile. This resulted in the people to repenting and returning fervently to God as a condition of returning to the land.⁶⁴ Granted a return to the land, this time, they would continually seek God, concentrating on religious matters rather than conquering the lost lands. In doing so, they would renew the religious center and its activities in Jerusalem. This was an experience-driven paradigm shift from the rhetoric of "land but land" in the first temple period to Jerusalem and its temple (Temple City⁶⁵) in the *Second Temple* period (cf. Ezra and Nehemiah). Hence the expression of the "holy city" and the "holy territory" (Isa 48:2; 52:1; Ne 1:18; Da 9:24; Zec 2:14-15).⁶⁶ The temple and its sanctity, as well as the observance of the Torah, became the primary objective to the returnees. The shift in emphasis from land to city is very clear indeed in the book of Nehemiah. For Nehemiah, Israel's *הרפה* (shame) is not based on the fact that the land of Israel lies in the hands of strangers, as in the book of Lamentation (5:1-2), it is rather the fact that the walls of *Jerusalem* are in ruins (Ne 2:5, 17; cf. Dt 30:5). Later, during the Hasmonean dynasty, although vast areas were recaptured, it

⁶⁴ Cf. Hos 2:16-18; 3:5; 5:15-6:1; 14:2-9; Jer 29:13-14; 1 Ki 8:47-48; Lev 26:38-42, 44-45; Dt 4:24-31; 28; 30:1-5; Ne 1:8-11;

⁶⁵ Jerusalem became the Temple City with the surrounding settlements as its subordinates; the entire life of the nation became dependent on the existence of the city and its Temple. A similar system is also found in Mesopotamia and Asia Minor such as Anatolia where thousands of people lived around the area of the temple. The temple and its surrounding area enjoyed an autonomous status – a gift granted by the king to the inhabitants; it is in this light that Cyrus' edict for the return of the Jews to Jerusalem should be understood. For further discussion, see literatures cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 202; H Tadmor, "Royal city and Holy City in Assyria and Babylonia," *Town and Community* (Lectures delivered at the twelfth convention of the Historical Society of Israel, December 1966) (Jerusalem, 1967), 179-206 (Hebrew); on Asia Minor, see A Archi, "Citta Sacre d'Asia Minore," *La Parola del Passato* 20 (1975), 329-44; T Zawadzki, "Quelques remarques sur l'entendue et l'accroissement des domaines des grands temples en Asia Mineure," *Eos* 46 (1952-53), 83-96; Libanius, *pro Templis* 9; M Weinfeld, *Justice and Righteousness in Israel and Nations* (Jerusalem, 1985) (Hebrew).

⁶⁶ For the expression of the "holy land" see chapter 4. The author of 2 Maccabees, in his letter to the Jews of Egypt, re-interprets the promise of redemption in Dt 30:3-5 as "... to the holy place" (2:18). The holy place (*εἰς τὸν ἁγιοντοπον*) here is not the land; when he refers to the land the author uses the term *γη: αὐτὰ γη* (1:7) (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 204).

was not for the sake of the land that they sacrificed their lives, but it was rather for the sake of their people, the city and the Temple, and the Torah.⁶⁷

A paradigm shift from the land to the city and its temple was found in the Qumran community as well. For them, the concept of the holiness of the land was limited only to the holiness of the Temple-city. This becomes the basis for the halakhic rules in Rabbinic literature whose prohibition pertains to the Temple city alone as against the entire camp in the Pentateuch.⁶⁸ An attempt to re-interpret the biblical concept of conquest and annihilation by depicting the settlement through peaceful negotiations with room for the acceptance of the Canaanites who repent, too, was also found in the Second Temple period literature.⁶⁹

Although the Hellenistic period is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is good to briefly see what Weinfeld has to say for a befitting ending. Towards the end of the Second Temple period, one finds another paradigm shift – the eschatological dimension of the promise of land. For the Hellenistic Jewish writers such as Eupolemus the son of Yohanan, whose central themes of Israel's history are the prophets, the sanctuary in Shiloh and the Temple in Jerusalem, Joshua and David's greatness lay not so much in their conquests of the land as in their establishment of the Tent of Meeting in Shiloh (Joshua) and the deeds that ultimately enabled Solomon to build the

⁶⁷ Cf. 1 Macc 14:29: "Simon and his brothers risked their lives in resisting the enemies of their people, in order that the Temple and the law might be preserved." See also 1 Macc 2:27, 49; 3:43, 59; 13:3; 15:17. Though their unrealistic utopian borders of the promised land include almost the whole territory of the NE (1Q Gen. Apoc. 21, 15-19; cf. Jubilees 8:20-21), a view influenced by contemporaneous Greek geographic models (Schmidt 1989), the Hasmoneans neither mentioned nor implemented the ancient laws concerning the conquest of the land. With respect to the territories they took back, they speak of it as *holding on to inherited territory* rather than the *conquest of land*, "We have neither taken other men's land nor have we possession of that which belongs to others, but of the inheritance of our fathers; howbeit, it was held in possession of our enemies wrongfully for a certain time. But we, having taken the opportunity, hold fast to the inheritance of our fathers." (1 Macc 15:33-34). Sometimes they speak of their resettlement in the land as settling in the desolated areas (no man's land) (Jth 5:19). For further discussion, see Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 206ff and extensive literatures cited there: Y M Grintz, *Judith* (Jerusalem, 1957), 114; F Schmidt, "Jewish Descriptions of the Settled Land during the Hellenistic and Roman Periods," in A Kasher, G Fuks, and U Rappaport, eds., *Greece and Rome in Eretz Israel: Collected Essays* (Jerusalem, 1989), 85-97 (Hebrew); D Mendels, *The Land of Israel as a Political Concept in Hasmonean Literature*, Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 15 (Tübingen, 1987), 63f., 129f.; Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 91.

⁶⁸ In quoting Numbers 5:3; 35:34; and Deuteronomy 21:23, the Temple Scroll (45:II. 13-14) speaks of the impurity of the city in difference to the impurity of the land in the passages in question. Only where reference to the land is unavoidable, such as with respect to graves within the borders of the land, does the scroll state, "You shall not defile your land" (48:II. 10-11). Even in this case "your land" is used instead of the expected "the land." See Y Yadin, *The Temple Scroll I* (Jerusalem, 1983), ch. 5 (Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 206).

⁶⁹ Cf. A Rabbinic source which says, "Joshua sent three proclamations (*prostagmata*) to the Canaanites: He who wishes to leave shall leave, he who wishes to make peace shall make peace, and he who wishes to fight shall do so" (Lev. Rabbah 17:6 9, ed. Margalioth, 386-87); Yerus. Sheb 6:5, 36c; Debarim Rabbah 5, 14 (quoted in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 211). For further discussion on the Rabbinic literatures cited in Weinfeld, see M Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism I* (Jerusalem, 1976), 20-24, 1976; J A Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphone of Qumran Cave 1*, 2nd rev. ed., (Rome, 1971), col. 21, 8-19 (68); Midrash Agaddah, Buber 1, 27; Mekhilta Pascha, sec. 18 (ed. Horowitz, 69-70); S Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshutah* 3 (New York, 1962), 105; F M Colson, *Philo*, Loeb Classical Library 9, (Cambridge, Mass., 1929-62), 419-21; Sifrei Deuteronomy, Sec 199, (ed. Finkelstein, 237, II. 7-8).

Temple (David).⁷⁰ Josephus envisages the promised land for the Israelites as not just Canaan but the entire world as a fulfillment of the “who will fill the entire earth” promise to Jacob (Ge 28:13-14).⁷¹ But his concern, as reflected by his stated reason for the return to rebuild cities and Temple, is rather spiritual.⁷² Philo speaks of a Jewish nation not of race or territory, but of religion and culture. He even allegorizes the inheritance of the land as inheriting wisdom.⁷³ The whole concept of land attained an eschatological dimension in the Rabbinic literature: the inheritance of the land was interpreted as inheriting a share in the unchangeable world to come (הלל בעולם הבא)⁷⁴ that can be attained only by holiness.

The Rabbinic flexibility that Weinfeld cites regarding territorial issues, unlike the pre-exilic typical Israelite land-minded patriotism, is surprising: “Many cities conquered by those who returned from Babylonia.... They left them so that the poor could rely upon them in the seventh year.”⁷⁵ This willingness to forgo areas of the Land of Israel in order to fulfill the commandment of giving gifts to the poor, Weinfeld assesses, reflects an attitude that land is a means to an end, and not an end in itself. However, in contradistinction to the prevailing tendency of stripping “the land” and Jerusalem of their realistic earthly meanings and to see them merely as symbols in Christianity, Weinfeld concludes, that Judaism always retains the real land and physical Jerusalem as the basis for the spiritual values and symbols mounted upon them. Without the real land and the earthly city, Messianic redemption was inconceivable in Judaism. This conclusion of Weinfeld is indeed interesting and stimulating.

⁷⁰ Cf. Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 213-214.

⁷¹ For further discussion, see Josephus, *Against Apion* 1 209-10; *Antiquities* 12, 274-76; also works cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 214: Y Gutman, *The Beginnings of Jewish-Hellenistic Literature* 2 (Jerusalem, 1963), 73-94, 155-58; B Z Wacholder, *Eupolemus, A Study of Judeo-Greek Literature* (Cincinnati, 1974); 1 Macc 2:39-42; B Halperin-Amaru, Land Theology in Josephus' Jewish Antiquities,” *JQR* 71 (1981), 202-29; A Shalit, *Antiquities of the Jews by Josephus* 2 (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 1955), 43, no. 295a (Hebrew).

⁷² Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 1:282; 4:114-16, 314; cf. Nu 23:10; 32:18-19.

⁷³ Cf. Philo, *The Heir* 4 96-99, Loeb Classical Library, trs F H Colson. Cf. also Philo, *Supplement 1, Questions and Answers on Genesis* (ed. R Marcus) 3, 16; H A Wolfson, *Philo* 2 (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), 401 (cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 216).

⁷⁴ For further discussion on the eschatological interpretation of the promise of land, see literatures cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 218-219: E E Urbach, “Inheritance Laws and After-Life,” *Proceedings of the Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies* 1 (Jerusalem, 1967), 139-40 (Hebrew; English abstract, 263); The Testament of Job 33:2-9; G Strecker, “Das Land Israel in früh Christlicher Zeit,” in Strecker, ed., *Das Land Israel in biblischer Zeit, Jerusalem Symposium, 1981* (Göttingen, 1983), 172-87; D Flusser, *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity: Studies and Essays* (Jerusalem, 1979), 188-200; S Safrai, “The Land of Israel in Tannaitic Halacha,” in Strecker, ed., (1983); I Fafni, “The Status of Erietz Israel in Reality and in Jewish Consciousness Following the Bar-Kokhva Uprising,” in A Oppenheimer and U Rappaport, eds., *The Bar-Kochva Revolt: A New Approach* (Jerusalem, 1984), 224-32 (Hebrew).

⁷⁵ Cf. BT Hagigah 3b; BT Hulin 7a; quoted in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 75.

2.4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Of the three works summarized above, Brueggemann mainly concentrates his studies on the theological-ethical dimensions of the land while Boorer and Weinfeld emphasize the motive and historical contexts of the promise respectively.

On the purpose of the promise of land: For Boorer, it came in different times in different contexts. During and after the conquests (from Joshua to David), the land of Canaan was made the promised land to justify Israel's possession of it. When Israel was under the threat of exile, the promise concept of the land was renewed to give the assurance that they would continue to possess the land because it was Yahweh who swore to give it to their fathers for forever. At the exile, the promise served as a basis and motivating force for returning to the land. Although Boorer's assertion is interesting, it is not convincing. There is no convincing reason to disassociate the beginning of the promise tradition from Abraham. The purpose of the promise of land in the Old Testament also cannot be just to address ad hoc problems. The texts clearly testify that it is more than that. Brueggemann and Weinfeld rightly assert it. For Brueggemann, God promises land to the Israelites, for that matter, to the whole of humanity, because he wills land to his people. So for Brueggemann, every human being in the world has a right to have a place (land) that he/she can call home. To deprive someone of this right is, therefore, a great injustice Christians cannot afford to be indifferent to. Weinfeld does not directly state the purpose of the promise of land. He, however, speaks about the uniqueness of the promise of land to the Israelites in terms of its religious and moral ramifications – for living a holy, righteous and just life. But both Brueggemann and Weinfeld's studies, too, on the subject are minimal. A closer reading of Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 3:8; 4:23 and 5:1 will illuminate that Yahweh has indeed good plans and purposes in promising a land to Israel (we will study this in detail in chapter 5).

On the conditions of the promise of land: Brueggemann, from a phenomenological-theological-ethical approach, argues that land conditions of the Old Testament are binding for Christians and others today. He, therefore, encourages all citizens of the world, especially Christians, to take up these challenges. Boorer does not particularly study the conditions of the promise of land. Weinfeld lists and briefly discuss some of them from a historical perspective (we will come back to this in chapter 4).

On the nature of the promise of land: Boorer does not specifically study the nature of the promise of land, whether it is conditional or unconditional. Her studies on the purpose, however,

are closely related to the conditions, which she believes were written according to the changing historical situations of Israel. Judging from his ethical applications, it seems that Brueggemann understands the promise of land in the Old Testament in a conditional term. Weinfeld gives a considerable space for the analysis of the nature of the promise. He sees a paradoxical nature of the promise of land, that is, it is conditional in some texts while in other texts it is unconditional. He then concludes that the earlier unconditional Abrahamic-Davidic covenant was made conditional later (Sinaitic covenant) by the Dtr editor, who saw the exile as Yahweh's punishment for Israel's failure to obey him. A closer study on the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, however, will show that both are indeed conditional. It is to this study of the nature of the promise of land that we now turn. Although we will attempt to study the nature, conditions, and purpose of the promise of land separately for the sake of clarity in the coming pages, they are however inter-related. Thus some overlapping will be unavoidable.

Chapter Three

THE NATURE OF THE PROMISE OF LAND:

Conditional or Unconditional

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we will approach our study of the nature of the promise of land – whether it is conditional or unconditional – by analyzing the four land covenant texts, as the promise of land in the Old Testament involves a covenantal promise as well as a covenantal obligation. In the Pentateuch the term “covenant” [ברית] is a metaphor used to describe the contractual agreement between Yahweh and Israel, an agreement of obligations binding these two contracting parties.¹

However, we must also remember that a covenantal (contractual) relationship is not the only expression of relationship between God and his people Israel in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy, we find the metaphor of a father and child relationship “to explain the nature of God’s creation and guidance of Israel (Dt 8:5; 32:6, 18) and Israel’s obligation to Him (Dt 14:1), and to characterize Israel’s rebellion as unfilial conduct (Dt 32:5-6, 18-20).”² The relationship between Yahweh and Israel is also described in terms of a family (Dt 5:7; 26:17; 29:12; 32:6). As we have discussed in chapter 1, Israel is also described as Yahweh’s inheritance exactly as the promised land is the inheritance of Israel; thus Yahweh’s sovereignty over Israel is legitimate and his attachment to her is unequalled (4:20; 32:9).

Nevertheless, when it comes to the nature of the promise of land, its best description is indeed found in the four Old Testament covenants. These covenants may be called ‘land covenants’, as they basically deal with land contracts between Yahweh and Israel. But before we study these covenants, it is necessary to briefly introduce the ANE covenant practices first, as the Old Testament land covenants are structured after the very covenant formulas of the ANE land grants and treaties.

¹ See also Terence E Fretheim, “The Book of Genesis: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” *NIB* (1994), 447; K Kutsch, *Verheissung und Gesetz: Untersuchungen zum Sogenannten “Bund” im alten Testament*, BZAW 131 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973) (cited in Walter Brueggemann, “Exodus: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” *NIB* [1994], 882).

² Cf. J H Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 1996), xv.

3.2. COVENANTS IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

A covenant was an instrument commonly used for the establishment and regulation of obligatory relationships between the great king and his vassal king or the master and his servant during the Old Testament times in the ANE especially the Syro-Hittite Late Bronze Age. The two most commonly practiced covenants of the ANE were the “Royal Grant” and the “Political Treaty.” The structures for both the grant and treaty are more or less similar. They include: identification of the covenant giver,³ historical introduction,⁴ border delineation (of the vassal’s reign), stipulations,⁵ deposit and periodic public reading (mainly with the treaty),⁶ witnesses,⁷ blessings and curses,⁸ and ceremonial ratification of the covenant.⁹ There are, however, some differences in their functions. The political treaty is usually a covenant made between a great king (suzerain) and his vassal king. The suzerain claims absolute right of sovereignty over his vassal, demands his total loyalty and service, and pledges protection of the vassal’s kingdom and dynasty. In turn, the vassal pledges absolute loyalty to his suzerain and exclusively relies on the suzerain’s protection. In other words, in the treaty, the vassal king has an obligation to his great king (suzerain). Thus, the curse is directed to the vassal who violates the rights of his suzerain, and the treaty is made for an inducement to the vassal’s future loyalty to his master. In contrast, the grant (of land or some other benefits) constitutes an obligation of the master to his servant. It is a reward for loyalty and good deeds already performed by the servant. Thus, the curse is directed toward anyone who violates the rights of the servant. In the Hittite royal land grant, the sovereign will punish the vassal if he violates the covenant but he will not cancel his commitment.

Thus, it is commonly assumed that the grant is an unconditional covenant, which serves to protect the rights of the servant, whereas the treaty is a conditional covenant that protects the

³ This is an introduction to the covenant. It typically begins with the formula “The words of ...” followed by the name of the Hittite king, his genealogy, and his various titles, ending with the epithet “the hero.”

⁴ The motivation for this section is to have the past benefits the king had bestowed upon the vassal (treaty) and the vassal’s (servant’s) loyalty and service to his king (master) (grant) as the foundation for the present obligation of the vassal to be obedient to the stipulations of the covenant and the master’s obligation to grant land or other benefits to his loyal servant respectively.

⁵ This section, often phrased in the case law format (“if ..., then ...”), describes the interests of the great king that the vassal is bound to protect and obey under the covenant relationship.

⁶ A copy of the covenant is deposited in the temple as an act and object of sacred placing the treaty within the interests of the local deity and under its protection. A periodic reading of it implies that the treaty is a public interest, which is integrated into the “law” of the vassal’s kingdom.

⁷ The gods are called upon to witness the covenant; they will also implement the curses of the oaths if the covenants were violated.

⁸ This section describes the consequences of obedience and disobedience with which the witnesses to the covenant (gods) reward or punish the vassal (servant).

⁹ The covenant is ratified by the animal sacrificial ceremony. The sacrificed animal represents, and is identified with, the vassal who is being placed under oath: just as the animal is slaughtered, so will the vassal and his dependants be if he violates his oath.

rights of the master only.¹⁰ However, there are also some elements that would suggest that the grant is not completely unconditional. It assumes the servant's continual loyalty to his master and his heirs will continue to receive the benefit only if they continue their father's loyalty and service.

We shall now analyze the four land covenants of the Old Testament in the light of these two ANE covenants. Although they are structured after the ANE covenant formulas, the Old Testament covenants are unique; unique in the sense that here God himself enters into a covenant relationship with humankind; the first time in the history of religions God becomes the contracting party.¹¹ By their very nature, the Old Testament covenants involve those who by faith receive the promises and commit themselves to the obligations the covenant demands.¹²

3.3. NATURE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT LAND COVENANTS

3.3.1. Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15 & 17)

Although the biblical traditions present Abraham as a man of faith par excellence, he too, as a mortal man, has his doubts and fears (cf. Ge 12:10-13; 20:1-2, 10-13). Here in Genesis 15, too, after his faith in Yahweh about the promise of posterity is commended in verse 6, his doubts about the promise of land are unreservedly reported in verse 8.

“Look up at the heavens and count the stars – if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Abraham believed in the Lord, and he credited to him as righteousness” (v.6).

He also said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.” But Abram said, “O sovereign Lord, how can I know that I shall gain possession of it?” (v.8).

Abraham might have been thinking that no one could indeed foil the promise of a son (v.4) if Yahweh has decided to give him; but there was a very big obstacle as to the promise of land. How could the promise of land possibly be realized, since the Canaanites were living in the very land that was being promised! Yahweh has to clear this doubt. He can only do this in a way that is intelligible to Abraham. In so doing, Yahweh enters into a covenant with Abraham, the highest form of assurance one could possibly give during that time. Would Yahweh fulfill his promise of land even if he did not make it a covenantal promise? The answer is definitely positive. But it

¹⁰ Cf. G E Mendenhall & G A Herion, “Covenant,” *ABD* Vol 1 (1992), 1179-1202; Ronald Youngblood, “Genesis,” *The Compact NIV Study Bible* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), 21; Moshe Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 223-264.

¹¹ Cf. Nahum Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 115.

¹² Cf. R S Rayburn, “Covenant,” *CEDT* (1991), 119.

was not easy for Abraham to be assured. For later generations, who have seen scriptural and historical witnesses of the promise fulfillment, to give a positive answer is easy; but for Abraham who had no scripture and who had not yet experienced such past fulfillment testimonies, initial doubt is understandable.

The structure and function of the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 15 follow that of the royal land grant. In verse 1, the *covenant giver identifies* himself as Abraham's shield and great reward. In verse 2, Abraham recognizes this 'I am your shield' as the Sovereign Lord. "Shield" here stands for "sovereign," and Yahweh is referring to himself as Abraham's king. Elsewhere in the Old Testament "shield" is a simile for king (Dt 33:29; 2 Sa 22:3; Ps 7:10; 84:9). "Your very great reward" means your reward will be great; I am going to grant you a land, the most coveted thing for an agrarian society.

Verse 7 is a *historical introduction*: "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it." Von Rad argues that God's making of the covenant is one of the oldest narratives in the tradition about the patriarchs.¹³ If that is the case, Yahweh's bringing Abraham out of Ur to Canaan, too, belongs to an older tradition. This is here given as a historical ground that eventually leads to Yahweh's making of a covenant with Abraham and his descendants. The same verb *אֵרָא* (to bring out) is later used to refer to the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. These two pivotal, formative events of exodus of Abraham (from Ur) and his descendants (from Egypt) became the ground for establishing a relationship between God and his people Israel in its subsequent history. His delivery is metaphorically described as that of the great king's delivery of a king who eventually became his vassal king. As such Yahweh became the divine sovereign for Israel in the promised land, and thus he has the authority to establish covenantal stipulations for governing the land.

Border delineation:

On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates – the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites (Ge 15:18-21).

Usually the Old Testament mentions seven, six, or five groups to refer to the pre-Israelite inhabitants of the land of Canaan; one reference mentions only three. But here there are ten. The list here would appear to represent an older tradition as it omits certain groups who settled in the land about the same time as Israel (eg, Philistines, Moabites) and includes other groups who

¹³ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, OTL (London: SCM, 1961; first published in German in 1956), 184.

were subsequently incorporated into the nation (eg, Kenites and Kenizzites).¹⁴ In different references, the Jebusites invariably appear in the final position. Sarna argues that this may betoken David's capture of Jerusalem, which was the culmination of his conquest.¹⁵ The geographic boundaries for the promised land, which include Tyre-Sidon, Lebanon, and Byblos, here seem to represent ideal boundaries rather than a historical reality. To some degree, they were attained during the Davidic-Solomonic reign. Even then, it was as an empire rather than a homeland (1 Ki 5:1,4; 8:65).¹⁶

Stipulations: The land grant to Abraham is a reward for his past loyalty and obedience to Yahweh. Verse 6 records: "Abraham believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (cf. v. 5 and 12:1, 4). However, the grant will only be realized after "four hundred"¹⁷ years (vv.12-16). Reason: the sins of the Amorites have to reach their full measure first. One wonders here, had the Amorites repented, what would have happened to the promise of land? The only answer to this question seems, Yahweh knows that the sins of the Amorites (we will come back to this in chapter 5) will reach such proportions in four hundred years that they will be engulfed in their effects¹⁸ (Dt 9:4-5; Lev 18:24-28; 1 Ki 21:20). Also, by granting the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants, Yahweh is sending a message to all peoples of the world that the whole earth belongs to him and so every nation must live a life worthy of the land of God. Failure to do so, regardless of where they are, will result in God's punishment. After four hundred years, Yahweh himself would bring Abraham's descendants out of Egypt and drive out the Canaanites for and before them. As for Abraham and his descendants, they are to worship Yahweh alone in total loyalty and obedience. As a sign of this commitment, they shall undergo circumcision (we will come back to this later).

In other ANE covenants, the gods are usually called upon to witness the covenant. Here Yahweh himself is the one who enters into the covenant and he himself is the *witness*. This shows how strong and unshakable is the validity of the covenant. It also entails that the Abrahamic covenant transcends space and time.

¹⁴ Cf. N Lohfink, *Die Landesverheissung als Eid*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 28 (Stuttgart, 1967), 65-72 (cited in G J Wenham, *Genesis 1 – 15*, WBC [Waco: Word, 1987], 333-334).

¹⁵ Sarna, *Genesis*, 117.

¹⁶ Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (London: Tyndale, 1967), 125. For further discussion on the borders of the promised land, see Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 52-76 (Weinfeld's study is represented in chapter 2 of this thesis).

¹⁷ Four hundred years here is a round figure for four generations – roughly one hundred years (century) each for a person's generation. Henceforth in this thesis as well, "four hundred" will represent a round figure of four generations.

¹⁸ See Fretheim, "Genesis," 449.

Yahweh *blesses* Abraham with a great reward (v.1b), which later verses identify as the possession of the land (v. 7, 18-21) and his offspring becoming as many as the stars in the sky (v.5; cf. 12:2-3). Land and posterity are the two greatest blessings for a nomad. What more could Abraham ask?

Curses: Interestingly the curse in this covenant is directed at Yahweh himself (v.17). We will analyze it together with the *ceremonial ratification of the covenant*. In verse 8 Abraham asks Yahweh: “O sovereign Lord, how can I know that I shall gain possession of it?” Abraham is here basically asking Yahweh, “How can I know that you will not cancel or violate your land grant?” In response, Yahweh enters into a solemn ceremonial ratification of the covenant with the patriarch:

So the Lord said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.” Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away (vv. 8-11, cf. v.18).

The Hebrew term for covenant-making is כרת ברית, literally, to cut a covenant (v.18). As mentioned earlier, the covenant is usually ratified with a ceremonial slaughtering (cutting) of animals. The corresponding phrase of כרת ברית in one form or another was widely used in the ANE texts.¹⁹ However, passing between the pieces of the animal (vv.10, 17) was not a common practice in the ANE covenant-making. Its parallel is found only in one other biblical reference, Jeremiah, which gives us some understanding of the Genesis text. In response to the nobility of Jerusalem’s reversal of the freedom from slavery they had proclaimed during the Babylonian siege, the prophet Jeremiah thundered:

Lo! I proclaim your release – declares the Lord – to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine; and I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. I will make the men who violated My covenant ... which they made before Me, [like] the calf which they cut in two so as to pass between the halves ... they shall be handed over to their enemies, to those who seek to kill them. Their carcasses shall become food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth ... (Jer 34:17-20; Sarna’s translation; cf. Sarna, *Genesis*, 114).

The cutting of the animal and passing between the cut pieces here represents a self-curse. “May God make me like this animal, if I do not fulfil the demands of the covenant.”²⁰ As mentioned above, in the Abrahamic covenant, Yahweh is the one who passes between the pieces and invokes a curse on himself should he fail to fulfil his promise of land to Abraham. Wenham asks: ‘Is it compatible with OT theology for God to say, “May I die, if I do not keep my word”?’

¹⁹ “The exact Aramaic equivalents of כרת ברית are g-z-r-‘dy’, found in the Sfire treaty from Syria, and ‘lt k-r-t, which appears in a magical text from the Arslan Tash in Turkey. The Greek *horkia temnein* and Latin *foedus ferie/ictum* express the same practice. In the Mari texts “to kill a donkey foal” (*ḥayarum/ayarum qatālum/šugtulum*) is to conclude a covenant. At Alalakh they “cut the neck of a sheep” (*kišad/immerum iṭbuḥ*) for the same purpose.” (cf. Sarna, *Genesis*, 114).

²⁰ Cf. Wenham, *Genesis*, 332; cf. *ANESTP*, 532.

Divine oaths generally take the form, “As I live, says the Lord” (cf. Nu 14:21).²¹ Wenham’s argument is interesting. However, we must be careful not to take the passage out of its context of the ANE covenant-making. The truth here is that Yahweh will never be cursed because he will never violate his promises. Making a covenant with a self-imprecation is the last act one would consider to demonstrate one’s intention to fulfil one’s promise, as its curse would be the last thing one would want. In so doing, Yahweh is giving Abraham here the strongest possible assurance in a way that is intelligible to Abraham. According to the royal land grant, the curse is in fact directed at Abraham’s enemies, those who interfere with the realization of Yahweh’s promise.²²

Every type of sacrificial animal is represented as a sign of including all Israel in the covenant. As regards the choice of three-year-old animals, Sarna does not see any significant meaning in it. It could be simply because a beast of three years was considered to be full-grown and was broken for service.²³ But Wenham argues for some significance. As Gideon’s sacrifice of a seven-year-old bull represents the seven years of Midianite oppression (Jdg 6:1, 25), the use of three three-year-old animals could well be to represent the certainty of events predicted (cf. Ge 41:32).²⁴

Unconditionality is commonly assumed for the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 15. Asserting the covenant as purely a promissory, Anderson gives three reasons for its unconditionality. First, it is an “everlasting covenant” based on the sovereign will of God, not on human behavior; second, it is a covenant of grace, based on the unilateral initiative of the covenant maker, not the virtues of the covenant recipient; and finally, it is a guarantee of the validity of God’s promises, specifically, that the people of God will be fruitful, that they will possess the land, and that they will stand in a special relationship to God as a serving, worshipping people.²⁵ However, Genesis 15 cannot be taken in isolation from chapter 17. A closer look at the ratification ceremony of the covenant in chapter 15 and the demand of circumcision in chapter 17 will suggest that the covenant is indeed conditional (cf. Ge 18:19; Dt 10:12-22; 30:6). Even if it is a less likely interpretation, there are both external and internal evidence that present a case for its conditionality. If it is modeled after the royal land grant of the ANE, Abraham is expected to continue in his faith that is credited to him as righteousness and the same is expected of his descendants as well. The circumcision in chapter 17 is a clear indication of it: “Any

²¹ Wenham, *Genesis*, 332.

²² Cf. Sarna, *Genesis*, 115.

²³ *ibid*, 115.

²⁴ *opcit*, 333.

²⁵ B W Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 103-104. For further analysis of the Abrahamic covenant, see pp. 81-128.

uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people, he has broken my covenant” (v.14). Circumcision is a sign of the covenant²⁶ (v.11). Physical circumcision represents circumcision of the heart – loyalty and obedience to Yahweh. If there is no circumcision of heart, physical circumcision has no meaning; it does not guarantee Yahweh’s blessing (Lev 26:40-42; Dt 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 6:10; 9:25-26; Eze 44:7-9; Joel 2:13; Isa 29:13; cf. Ro 2:25-29). Abraham’s circumcision in chapter 17 is a self-maledictory oath in response to the oath Yahweh has sworn to himself in chapter 15. By undergoing the circumcision, Abraham makes a covenanted commitment for loyalty and obedience to Yahweh swearing: “If I am not loyal in faith and obedience to the Lord, may the sword of the Lord cut off me and my offspring as I have cut off my foreskin.”²⁷ Abraham and his offspring will be cut off from the land if they do not keep the covenant, as was the case with the Amorites before them (v.16b; cf. Lev 18:25, 28). This clearly presents a case for the conditionality of the Abrahamic covenant.

3.3.2. Sinaitic Covenant (Ex 19-24 ; cf. Dt 5 :6-18 ; chap. 12-16)

Because of its striking structural parallel to the political treaty of the ANE between the great king and a vassal king, it is believed that the Sinaitic covenant could well be a Dtr construction during the late monarchy or exilic period. However, Bosman argues for its ancient origin. Although, based on its substance of agriculturally based economy, the texts of the “Book of the Covenant” (Ex 20-23) could only have been finally codified after the settlement in the Palestine, he observes that its core collections date back to the pre-monarchy period. The ‘injunction to “give” or sacrifice “the first born of your sons” to the Lord (Ex 22:29) is a macabre relic of an ancient custom.’²⁸ The solemnity and validity of the covenant can strongly be felt, as we read through the lines of the “Book of the Covenant.” First, Yahweh the sovereign divine invites the nation Israel to enter into a covenant relationship with him (19:3-6) and Israel accepts the offer (19:7-8a). Preparations are then made for the covenant-making ceremony (19:8b-25). Basic covenant stipulations (Decalogue) are written by Yahweh himself (Ex 20:1-17; cf. Dt 5:6-18). Because the people are too frightened by the theophany, they could not bear any more to hear God present the remaining stipulations. So God communicates them only to Moses (Ex 20:22-23:33; Dt 5:16-

²⁶ Circumcision was not in fact practised only by the Israelites. Other nations too did practise it, but not for the same covenantal reason Israel practised it (cf. Jer 9:25-26; Eze 32:18-19).

²⁷ Cf. Youngblood, “Genesis,” 33.

²⁸ Hendrik Bosman, ““Such a thing is not done in Israel”. The Judicial System of Ancient Israel,” in H L Bosman, I G P Gous, and I J J Spangenberg, eds., *Plutocrats and Paupers: Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament* (Pretoria: van Schaik, 1991), 191. See also Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary*, OTL (London: SCM, 1962; first published in German in 1959), 194-195; Brevard S Childs, *Exodus: A Commentary*, OTL (London: SCM, 1974), 501.

6:3). The covenant is ratified with a ceremony (chapter 24).²⁹ According to the book of Deuteronomy, Moses presents the additional stipulations to the people forty years later in Moab, shortly before his death. There at Moab, the original Sinaitic covenant is reconfirmed with a second one covering the additional stipulations (cf. Dt 12-26). It must be affirmed again (for a third time) as soon as Israel enters the promised land (cf. Dt 27-28).

The Sinaitic covenant is in a sense a renewal and reaffirmation of the Abrahamic covenant. Yahweh brought Abraham out of Ur to give him the land of Canaan as an inheritance for his descendants who would possess the land after four hundred years. Four hundred years have gone and the Israelites have come. They would soon possess the land that was promised to their fathers. But before they enter into the land, they must enter into a land covenant with Yahweh first, as the land they are going to possess belongs to Yahweh. Moreover, the exodus generation needs to know that Yahweh who brought them out of Egypt and is leading them to the promised land is the same God who gave a covenantal land promise to their father Abraham. Furthermore, the stipulations of the Abrahamic covenant were in the form of principles – circumcision as a sign of loyalty and obedience to Yahweh; there were no specific conditions stipulated. Here at the Sinaitic covenant, stipulations are extensive and detailed, as the Israelites are now really going to live in the land. It is impossible to exaggerate the seriousness of the covenant, as it was affirmed at the crossing of the Jordan and must be reaffirmed after their entry into the land.

These are *the commands, decrees and laws* the Lord your God directed me to teach you *to observe in the land* that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you (Dt 6:1-3; cf. 5:23-33) (emphases mine).

The structures of the Sinaitic covenant and the ANE treaty are strikingly similar except that, in the Sinaitic covenant, the *identification of the covenant giver* and *historical introduction* are structured together: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” (20:2; cf. 19:4). Unlike the “great kings” in the Bronze Age political treaties, assert Mendenhall and Herion, the one God of Mosaic monotheism is not identified by heaping up divine epithets and attributes so characteristic of ancient polytheism; rather, at the very beginning Yahweh is simply identified in terms of what he had done.³⁰

²⁹ See also Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus, Vol 3*, in Cornelis Houtman, et al., eds., *Historical Commentary of the Old Testament* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 285; Stephen J Binz, *The God of Freedom: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 94-97.

³⁰ Cf. Mendenhall & Herion, “Covenant,” 1183.

Border delineation: “My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites” (23:23). The preceding verse 22 presents a strong case for the language of the treaty: “If you listen carefully to what he (the angel) says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you.” There is an ethnographic change here. Four nations (Kenites, Kenizites, Kadmonites and Rephaites) that are mentioned in Genesis 15:19-21 do not appear here. Four hundred years have elapsed since the Abrahamic covenant, so these ethnic groups have probably become extinct, been driven out of the area by other groups, or been incorporated into the nation Israel (probably this was the case with Kenites and Kenizites if one assumes that the text is a later Dtr edition). “I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River” (23:31). These borders stretch from the Red Sea (Hebrew יַם סוּף, Sea of Reeds or Gulf of Akaba) in the (south) east to Mediterranean Sea in the west, and from the desert and steppeland in the south to the Euphrates River in the north. The extents of the borders of the promised land of the Sinaitic covenant are the same as that of the Abrahamic covenant (see appendix 2).

Stipulations: The Decalogue or the Ten Words (cf. Dt 10:4) of Exodus 20:1-17; cf. Dt 5:6-18 are traditionally regarded as the basic stipulations of the Sinaitic covenant written by Yahweh himself. Additional stipulations of Ex 20:22-23:33; cf. Dt 12-26, given by God through Moses, serve as the guiding principles for the implementation of the Decalogue; something similar to the “constitution” and “by-laws” in today’s judicial terms. Interestingly, the first three commandments (no other gods, no idol, and no misuse of the name of the Lord) only are in line with the stipulations of the treaty; whereas the rest are uniquely the Old Testament;³¹ they seem to have no parallel in the ANE treaties. If the covenant is to be intelligible to the Israelites, who are a part of their contemporary culture, it has to be structured according to the practiced and familiar patterns of the contemporary judicial system. However, its contents and emphases do not have to follow that of the former, as it is a unique covenant, a God entering into a covenant with humankind.

There are at least six elements in the Decalogue that are not found in other ANE treaties: the idea of a covenantal obligatory relationship between Yahweh and all individuals of the nation (not

³¹ Although the Decalogue is unique in terms of stipulations for a treaty, many of its provisions are closely paralleled in the wisdom and ethical literature of the ancient world, which law collections are based on ethical and moral principles. Sarna discovers that false witness, disrespect of parents, theft, adultery, and murder are all listed in the magic texts from Mesopotamia known as the *Shurpu* series, and the “Declaration of Innocence,” located in chapter 125 of the Egyptian “Book of the Dead,” is formulated in negative terms and clearly testifies to the reality of positive moral ideals. It is obvious, Sarna concludes, that the great civilizations of the Nile and Mesopotamian

just the vassal king); the formation of the covenant in a narrative style;³² its embrace of the internal life of the vassals by regulating individual behavior and human relationships; the covenant as the expression of divine will that is eternally binding on the individual and on society as a whole; the amalgamation of religious and secular or social obligations; and the apodictic nature of its stipulations.³³

Deposit and public reading, witnesses, blessings, and curses. Since there was no temple in the wilderness in which to deposit the text of the covenant written on the tablets of stone, they were deposited in the ark of the covenant (Ex 25:21; Dt 10:5; *passim*; cf. Jos 24:26). Evidences of periodic public readings can be deduced from references to ritual customs such as Exodus 23:17 and Deuteronomy 27:11-26. Levenson argues: "The recitation of *shama'* is the rabbinic covenantal renewal."³⁴ The Israelites themselves are the witnesses, as to have gods as witnesses is incompatible with their monotheistic belief (cf. Jos 24:22, 27; Zep 1:12). Apart from Exodus 23:25-26³⁵ that sums up the blessings of the covenant, numerous blessings and curses are spelled out in detail in Deuteronomy 27 & 28.

Ceremonial ratification of the covenant: The Sinaitic land covenant gives a two-fold ratification of the covenant in which Moses serves as the agent of Yahweh. The first is a verbal oath to the covenant: "We will do everything the Lord has said" (Ex 24:3; cf. 19:8. See also Jos 24:24. Joshua 24 is in fact a narrative description of a covenant enactment). The second is a ritual act of sacrificing an animal (Ex 24:5-8). In some ethnic groups, from time immemorial till today humans have bound themselves to each other by exchanging blood.³⁶ As the Old Testament covenant tradition inevitably belongs to its contemporary ANE covenant tradition, the blood of the animal that is sprinkled upon the altar and upon the people are symbolic acts in which the fates of the people who violate the covenant stipulations are identified with the fate of the sacrificed animal. The covenant is sealed with blood – a self-curse oath. The twelve pillars symbolize that all Israel is included in the covenant (v.8). The men are said to have heard and "seen Yahweh"³⁷ and eat and drink before him (24:9-11). This is none other than a covenant

valleys could not have functioned without a commitment to a set of ethical ideals and principles of morality (*Genesis*, 102).

³² It is this narrative context, asserts Sarna, that imparts to the covenant its meaning and significance; the covenant would be devalued were the link between them to be severed (*ibid*).

³³ Cf. Sarna, *Genesis*, 102-103.

³⁴ J Levenson, *Sinai and Zion* (New York, 1985) (quoted in Mendenhall & Herion, "Covenant," 1184).

³⁵ "Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span."

³⁶ Cf. F B Meyer, *Devotional Commentary on Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1978), 285-285.

³⁷ Here in Exodus 24:8b and 11b, the men are said to have seen Yahweh and still alive. This is in contradiction with 33:20 that says, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." The MT is translated in the LXX as: "and they saw the place where the God of Israel stood" (cf. 24:11). The meaning seems to be that Yahweh, when Aaron and companions arrived, had already left the place (cf. 17:16 LXX). Some argue that they saw the divine

meal mysteriously shared by Yahweh and the representatives of Israel as a sign that the covenant is now binding on both sides.³⁸

The promise of land, according to the Sinaitic covenant, is, therefore, unequivocally conditional. If Israel wants to receive this gift of land, enjoy its produce, and continue to possess the land, then she must accept its stipulations as well and observe them. Failure to observe the stipulations of the covenant will result in losing the land (Dt 4:25-28; Lev 18:24-28; *passim*). Israel accepts the offer with all its conditions and enters into a covenantal contract with Yahweh by a verbal oath (“we will do everything the Lord has said”), identification with the fate of the sacrificed animal as a self-curse oath, and participating in a covenant meal.

3.3.3. Davidic Covenant (2 Sa 7:5-29)

The Abrahamic covenant was renewed and reaffirmed after four hundred years (at Sinai). Another four hundred years have elapsed since the Sinaitic covenant, passing through the conquest and settlement (under Joshua and Caleb and the Judges), the establishment of the first monarchy (under Saul) till the reign of David, the second king. The Abrahamic-Sinaitic covenant needs to be renewed and reaffirmed lest the Israelites forget the history of the promised land, especially King David who might even have not known about it at all and so treat it as if it is his royal space.

The Davidic covenant is modeled after the royal land grant. In verses 5 and 8, we see Yahweh identifying himself as the *covenant giver*: “Go and tell my servant David, ‘This is what the Lord says ...’” Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says ...’” Verses 8b and 9 are *historical introduction*: “I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you.” David’s loyalty and faithfulness to Yahweh is also the historical reason for making this covenant with him (cf. 2 Sa 6 :15-17 ; 7 :2). *Border delineation*: There is no explicit border delineation in the chapter. Verse 10 says: “I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be

vision (e.g., U Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* [Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1967; first published in Hebrew in 1951], 314). According to the targums, the Israelites did not see God himself: they saw “the glory of the God of Israel.” This seems the best interpretation, as gazing at God’s glory is possible for humans (cf. Houtman, *Exodus*, 292) (cf. 3:6; Ge 16:13; Nu 12:8; Eze 1:28).

³⁸ Cf. Noth, *Exodus*, 194-196; Childs, *Exodus*, 504-505; Bosman, “The Judicial System,” 197-201.

disturbed.” The subsequent narratives of David’s victories (empire)³⁹ present this “place for Israel” or “a home of their own” borders as reaching that of the promised land of Genesis 15 and Exodus 23.

Stipulations: According to verses 11b-16, Yahweh will punish if David’s descendant(s)’ do wrong, but Yahweh will not take his love away from him (them), that is, the dynasty of David will last forever. Based on this, it is commonly assumed that the Davidic covenant is unconditional. However, according to the seventh or sixth-century Dtr, several centuries after the time of David and Solomon, the Davidic covenant is in fact seen as conditional – the continuity of Davidic dynasty will depend on David’s descendant kings’ obedience to the Torah (1 Ki 6:12; 8:25; Ps 89:31-34 – ET vv. 30-33).⁴⁰ Like in the Abrahamic covenant, Yahweh swears by himself here as the *witness* of the covenant (Ps 89:36 – ET v.35), as another deity could not serve in this capacity. Yahweh then *blesses* David and his dynasty (vv. 9b, 10b, 11; cf. vv.18-29). The *curse* element is missing except in the form of later Dtr’s threat of exile. There is no ceremonial ratification of the covenant. The covenant is simply and privately concluded with David’s prayer of acceptance of Yahweh’s offer and his dedication to the cause of the covenant (vv.18-29).

3.3.4. New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34)

After “four hundred years”⁴¹ of the Davidic covenant, Yahweh enters into yet another covenant with Israel; this time, however, it is totally a different type of covenant, a new one. The date and authorship of the new covenant, however, are debated. Some assign it to the early prophetic preaching of the Northern Kingdom,⁴² others attribute it to the Dtr,⁴³ a disciple of Jeremiah, or a

³⁹ The extent of David’s empire: Jebusite Jerusalem and remaining Canaanite cities (2 Sa 5:6-10); treaty with Hiram of Tyre, king of the Phoenicians (2 Sa 5:11-12); Philistines (2 Sa 5:17-25; 8:1); Moabites (2 Sa 8:2); Aramean kingdoms of Hadadezer (King of Zobah), Damascus and Maacah (2 Sa 8:3-8; 10:6-19); Talmi, the Aramean king of Geshur made peace with David (2 Sa 3:3; cf. 1 Ch 2:23); Edomites (2 Sa 8:13-14); Amorites (2 Sa 12:19-31); Amalekites (1 Sa 30:17) (cf. *NIV Study Bible* (1985), 433; cf. Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 64-75). See also Ps 60:8-9; 72:8, 11; 89:26; 108:8-10; 2 Sa 10:19; 24; 1 Ki 4; 5:1; Jos 13-19; 21; Ex 23:31; Nu 21:24; 32:16ff, 40-41; Dt 11:24; Isa 27:12; Mic 7:12.

⁴⁰ See also Mendenhall & Herion, “Covenant,” 1189.

⁴¹ It is interesting to see that the land covenant is enacted every four hundred years – four hundred years from Abraham to Sinai, four hundred years from Sinai to David, four hundred years from David to Jeremiah (new covenant). As it takes four hundred years to fulfil the Abrahamic covenant, it takes four hundred years (in line with Christian interpretation) to fulfil the new covenant with Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, I will leave it here for future further research.

⁴² For example W Rudolph, “Jesaja xv-xvi,” *Hebrew and Semitic Studies presented to Godfrey Rolles Driver in celebration of his seventieth birthday 20 August 1962*, D W Thomas and W D McHardy, eds. (Clarendon Press, 1963), 201 (cited in Robert P Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, OTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986], 613).

⁴³ For example, S Bohmer, *Heimkehr und neuer Bund: Studien zu Jeremia 30-31*, Göttinger Theologische Arbeiten 5 (Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1976); S Herrmann, “Overcoming the Israelite Crisis: Remarks on the Interpretation of the Book of Jeremiah” (Perdue and Kovacs, 1984), 299-311; E W Nicholson, *Preaching in the Exiles: A Study of*

post-exilic scribe.⁴⁴ But there is no convincing reason to doubt the traditional attribution to the prophet Jeremiah himself.⁴⁵ The nature of the prophecy suggests that Jeremiah announces the new covenant shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, at the verge of their exile from the land to Babylon.

“The time is coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (emphases added).

This is the only place the “new covenant” (ברית חדשה) is mentioned in the Old Testament. Two groups in later centuries – the Qumran community and Christians – claim that they are the fulfillment of this new covenant. But the new covenant for the Qumran community is nothing more than the Sinaitic covenant with strong legalistic tendencies.⁴⁶ The traditional Christian interpretation does have convincing internal evidences. It considers the blood of Jesus that is shed on the cross as the blood of the new covenant, and so regards Christ’s forgiveness and salvation of sinners and his lordship over the believers through his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and the Pentecost as the fulfillment of the promised new covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:5-18; Heb 8:8-12; 10:1-8, 16-17).⁴⁷ In recent years, this traditional interpretation has, however, been contested in favor of a pre-Christian fulfillment or a not yet fulfilled interpretation of the promise.⁴⁸ Without rejecting the traditional Christian interpretation, but assigning it to the biblical (Old and New Testaments combined) theological studies, this thesis will analyze the new covenant within the context of the Old Testament.

The gravest curse for a breach of the covenant was “the destruction and scattering of the body politic with which the covenant initially was formed”⁴⁹ (cf. Lev 26:27-39; Dt 28:36-37, 45-68).

the Prose Tradition in the Book of Jeremiah (Basil Blackwell, 1970); W Thiel, *Die deuteronomistisch Redaktion von Jeremia 26-95*, WMANT 52 (Neukirchener Verlag, 1981) (cited in Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 613).

⁴⁴ For a disciple of Jeremiah, e.g., J Coppens, “La nouvelle alliance en Jér. 31, 31-34,” *CBQ* 25 (1963), 12-21; S Mowinkel, “La connaissance de Dieu chez les prophètes de l’Ancien Testament (1),” *RHPhR* 22 (1942), 93-96; for a post-exilic scribe, e.g., Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 613; B Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia*, Die poetischen und prophetischen Bücher des Alten Testaments. Übersetzungen in den Vermassen der Urschrift III (J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1903) (cited in Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 613).

⁴⁵ See also Mendenhall & Herion, “Covenant,” 1192; R Martin-Achard, “Quelques remarques sur la nouvelle alliance chez Jérémie (Jérémie 31, 31-34),” *Questions disputées d’Ancien Testament: Méthode et Théologie*, BETL 33, C Brekelmans, ed. (Leuven University Press, 1974), 141-64; B W Anderson, “The New Covenant and the Old,” in B W Anderson, ed., *The Old Testament and Christian Faith: Essays by Rudolf Bultmann and others* (SCM, 1964) 225-42 (cited in Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 613).

⁴⁶ Cf. J A Thomson, “The Book of Jeremiah,” *NICOT* (1980), 580.

⁴⁷ See also F B Huey, Jr., “Jeremiah, Lamentations,” *NAC* (1993), 279-286.

⁴⁸ See Robert P Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 609-614; Gerald L Keown, Pamela J Scalise, and Thomas G Smothers, “Jeremiah 26-52,” *WBC* (1995), 130-135; Thomson, “The Book of Jeremiah,” 579-581.

⁴⁹ Cf. Mendenhall & Herion, “Covenant,” 1192.

With the fall of Jerusalem and the impending exile, there is no more body politic (king or organization) to which the covenant would apply. Theoretically, the Sinaitic covenant has become obsolete. Therefore, if there is to be the promise of a future restoration to the land (cf. vv.27-28), it has to be through the enactment of a new covenant with the people, both the house (family) of Judah and the house (family) of Israel (v.31b). In verse 33a Israel is used as a generic term for both Judah and Israel. The structure (or lack of structure) emphasizes the discontinuity from the old covenant traditions. Except for the identification of Yahweh as the divine sovereign, the covenant giver, and the stipulations of the covenant (see below), other elements of the covenant-making (historical introduction,⁵⁰ border delineation,⁵¹ deposit and periodic reading,⁵² witnesses, blessings⁵³ and curses, and ceremonial ratification of the covenant) are not explicitly mentioned, although the text may interpretively imply some of them (see notes 50-53). The new covenant is announced in a future term “I will” to the exiling Israel. In addition, unlike other covenants, Israel as the covenant party here is addressed in the third person. This suggests that the new covenant was not for Jeremiah’s and his immediate audience, but for a distant future generation of restored Israel.

“My תורה” (Torah, which means instruction, law) in verse 33 and “דעת יהוה” (knowledge of the Lord) in verse 34 are the stipulations of this new covenant. In the book of Jeremiah, תורה usually refers to the revelation of God’s will and way in the form of commandments, statutes, and words that must be heeded (6:19; 9:12-13 [ET 13-14]; 16:11; 26:4; 32:23; 44:10, 23). For Jeremiah, the Israelites’ choice of Baal instead of Yahweh (9:12-13; 16:11) was because of the priests (2:8) and scribes’ (8:8) failure to uphold the law for the sake of the people. In the Sinaitic covenant, the covenant document written by Moses is called התורה הזאת (this instruction, especially in Deuteronomy), which historical introduction recites how the Lord had saved the people of Israel and entered into a covenant with them in order to give them the land. For Jeremiah, this very ability of both recounting Yahweh’s salvation of Israel (2:6-8) and obedience to his commands (22:15-17) are aspects of knowing the Lord. So both of them will be included in the stipulations of the new covenant, the instruction to be written on the heart in the restored promised land.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, “Jeremiah 26-52,” 134, however, argue that 16:14-15 is the historical prologue for the new covenant of 31:13-34.

⁵¹ 31:27-28; cf. v.32; 16:14-15; 33:12-13 seem to imply that the restored Israel will repossess the borders of Israel and Judah before the exile.

⁵² Instead of the deposit of the covenant in the temple (ark) and periodic public reading of it by the priests and scribes, the law shall be deposited in the minds and written on the hearts of the people in order to consciously remember it all the time.

⁵³ Yahweh’s forgiveness and forgetting of their sins in verse 34 may be regarded as blessings.

⁵⁴ See also Keown, Scalise, & Smothers, “Jeremiah 26-52,” 134; Mendenhall & Herion, “Covenant,” 1192-3.

A superficial reading of the text may lead one to jump into a conclusion that the Sinaitic covenant was broken because it was externally imposed (written on stone, Ex 31:18; 34:28-29; Dt 4:13; 5:22 or in a book, Ex 24:7). It is true that it was external. However, like the new covenant, it was meant for the circumcised heart (inner change), which alone could make one capable of obedience to this (old covenant's external) law. "The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live" (Dt 30:6; cf. 10:16; Lev 26:40-42; Jer 4:4; 6:10; 9:25-26; Eze 44:7-9; Joel 2:13; Isa 29:13). Therefore, the stipulations of the new covenant that Yahweh will put in the minds and written on the hearts of the people are the same as that of the old covenant – his תורה.

Based on past experiences of persistent failures, Jeremiah knows too well that the people of Israel are incapable to obey the law by their own effort.⁵⁵ He asks: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots?" (13:23a). Definitely not. Neither could the people of Israel do good by themselves because of their sinful nature, to borrow a systematic theological term (cf. v.23b). The new covenant is, therefore, basically Israel's testimony that only Yahweh himself can bring about the necessary change in the people's inner nature that will make them capable of obedience. And Yahweh is promising this. In so doing, the new covenant will result in "everyone" ("from the least of them to the greatest") knowing and obeying Yahweh. This state of no one breaking the covenant is not to be dismissed easily as a mere utopian ideal that is impossible to realize in history. On the other hand, one can also argue that a covenant is a national and moral obligation, which may be kept or broken, so if there is no room for breaking, then it is not a covenant. Like כל (all, every, or each) does not necessarily mean a hundred percent numerical "all" in many cases (see chapter 5), "from the least of them to the greatest" here does not necessarily mean all Israel or all people. It envisages (or transcends) space and time where and when many (a great majority in difference to a small minority in the old covenant) will be obedient. Will these "many" obedient people sin and so break the covenant again? The answer seems positive. No where in the text does it say that the new covenant will not be broken. Although the forgiveness of verse 34 basically refers to forgiveness from the sins of the violation of the old covenant, it also envisages forgiveness for the present and future breaking of the same. This implies that the new covenant community, too, are vulnerable to sin. However, they will not be deliberately sinning because the knowledge of Yahweh's will will be deposited within their consciences. If they sin, unlike the stiff-necked people of the old covenant,

⁵⁵ Cf. Thomson, "The Book of Jeremiah," 581.

the new covenant people will repent with a contrite heart and return to Yahweh, thus will they be forgiven again.

In sum, like in the previous covenants, the promise of land in the new covenant, too, is conditional. Nowhere in the text does it say that the stipulations of the old covenant are nullified and thus are no more binding for the new covenant community. It only says that, instead of putting it in terms of stone tablets or written documents, the stipulations of the new covenant will be put in one's minds (Hebrew, inward parts) and written on one's heart. This clearly shows that the תורה (the stipulations of the old covenant) are still binding for the new covenant. The good news, however, is that, here in the new covenant, Yahweh himself will help the covenant community to be capable of obedience to his תורה.

The 'eschatological concept' of the new covenant also is not ruled out. For Bultmann this eschatological concept indeed rescues a resonant word ברית from oblivion.⁵⁶ In fact, an eschatological interpretation is the most comfortable one if we take the fulfillment of the promises of the new covenant literally. In the *eschaton*, Yahweh's kingship would be universally acknowledged and the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord (cf. Isa 9:6-7; 11:1-10; 32:1-5; Jer 23:5-6; 33:14-22; Da 7:18, 22, 27; Am 9:11-12; Mic 5:2-4; Hab 2:14; Zech 14:3-9).

3.4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The following table will give a broad picture of similarities between the ANE covenant and the Old Testament covenants analyzed above. Their stipulations will show that all the covenants are indeed conditional.

⁵⁶ R Bultmann, "Prophecy and Fulfilment," *Essays Theological and Ethical* (London: SCM, 1955), 182-208 (cited in Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 614).

Table 4. Similarities between the ANE land treaties and the OT land covenants

Structure	ANE	Abrahamic	Sinaitic	Davidic	New
<i>Covenant giver and recipient</i>	The great king and his vassal king	Yahweh, the divine sovereign, & Abraham	Yahweh, the divine sovereign, & the Israelites	Yahweh, the divine sovereign, & David	Yahweh, the divine sovereign & Israel
<i>Historical introduction</i>	What the great king has done to the vassal king (treaty) or the vassal's past loyalty to the master (grant)	Yahweh brought Abraham out of Ur; Abraham was faithful and obedient to Yahweh	Yahweh brought the Israelites out of Egypt in fulfillment of his promise to their fathers	Yahweh took David out of the pasture and saved him from his enemies; David was loyal and faithful to Yahweh	Yahweh will bring Israel back to the promised land from the exile
<i>Border delineation</i>	Borders of the vassal's realm where the covenant stipulations will be in force	From the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, from the Sinai peninsula (desert) to the Euphrates River	From the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, from the Sinai peninsula (desert) to the Euphrates River	David's empire extends to the borders of the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants	The borders of Israel and Judah before the exile
<i>Stipulations</i> (This suggests that all the covenants are conditional)	The great king's obligations to the vassal (grant) and the vassal's obligations to the great king in both the grant and treaty	Loyalty and obedience, circumcision of the flesh as a sign of the circumcision of the heart	Obedience to the Decalogue and additional laws based on the principles of the Decalogue	Obedience to the Torah (instructions)	Obedience to the Torah (Knowledge of Yahweh provided by Yahweh himself)
<i>Deposit and periodic public reading</i>	A copy of the covenant deposited in the temple for periodic public reading	Circumcision as a reminder of the covenant	The tablet is deposited in the ark; Israel recites it on the Passover and in other rites	The reading of the Torah as the king's main duty	Torah put in their minds and written on their hearts
<i>Witnesses</i>	The gods	Yahweh himself	Yahweh himself and the people themselves	Yahweh himself	Yahweh himself
<i>Blessings and curses</i>	Blessings for obedience and curse for violation. The gods to implement the curses	Name, posterity, and land (prosperity) for keeping the covenant and destruction for violation	Prosperity, posterity, peace and rest, and continual possession of the land for obedience and destruction and exile for disobedience	A continual dynasty for obedience and ending of the dynasty for disobedience	A community where everyone knows Yahweh, repentance possible and forgiveness available in abundance
<i>Ceremonial ratification</i>	Self-curse by identifying oneself with the fate of the cut animals	Self-curse: Yahweh passes through the cut pieces of the animals; Abraham undergoes circumcision	Self-curse: the people swear verbally, blood sprinkled on them, and participate in the covenant meal.	David's prayer of thanks and dedication	

Tigay rightly captures the whole concept of the covenant in a few lines: “The covenant relationship between God and Israel is summed up concisely in Deuteronomy 26:16-19, a passage which shows that the covenant metaphor, which is rooted in the political and legal spheres, implies that the relationship between God and Israel is not a purely emotional or spiritual association, but one that also entails specific obligations that were mutually agreed upon and have consequences”⁵⁷ (cf. Ex 19:5-6). But how do we reconcile the two seemingly conflicting covenants according to the traditional interpretations – Abrahamic-Davidic as unconditional and Sinaitic as conditional? Some, for example Weinfeld, believe that with the awakening of national guilt feelings as a result of the fall of Samaria and Jerusalem that led Israelites into exile, the ancient unconditional concept of the promise of land was reinterpreted by the Dtr as a conditional one. Two separate covenants were joined. The Abrahamic covenant was understood as conditioned on the observance of the Torah⁵⁸ and the Davidic covenant as conditioned by the Sinaitic covenant. Though this assertion of the original unconditional promise being eventually made conditional in a later time in the light of Israel’s experience of exile has a strong possibility, there is also a possibility that all the four land covenants in fact are conditional from the beginning.

As I have argued above, the Abrahamic covenantal land promise is conditional because it demands a continual loyalty and obedience to Yahweh on the part of Abraham and his descendants. The Sinaitic covenantal land treaty is unquestionably conditional, as its stipulations would clearly demonstrate. The Davidic covenantal dynasty is conditional because it demands a continual loyalty to Yahweh and obedience to the Torah on the part of David’s descendant-successors. The new covenantal land restoration promise, too, is conditional because the old (Sinaitic) covenant stipulations are never nullified; let alone nullifying, these stipulations are put in one’s mind and written on one’s heart. This is indeed a strong indication that Yaweh still wants his new covenant people to observe his stipulations.

The fact that the promise of land in the Old Testament is conditional is strongly supported by the explicit conditions expressed in the legal instructions, holiness codes, narrative lessons, prophetic oracles, and wisdom livings of the Old Testament. It is to these conditions of the promise of land that we now turn.

⁵⁷ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, xiv.

⁵⁸ Cf. Ge 15:16; Dt 4:26; 6:15; 11:17; 28:21, 63; 29:27; Jos 23:13, 15, 16; 1 Ki 9:7; 13:34; 14:15.

Chapter Four

THE CONDITIONS OF THE PROMISE OF LAND

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In our textual analysis of chapter 1, we observed that God is the ultimate owner of the land and the Israelites receive it from God as a gift. In chapter 3, we concluded that the promise of land in the Old Testament is conditional. In this chapter we will analyze these conditions, and Israel's response to it. We will also highlight some ethical implications for today's community, especially Christians.

4.2. EXCLUSIVE WORSHIP OF YAHWEH

This is the first and foremost important condition of the promise of land. In order to possess and continue possessing the land, the Israelites must not worship any other god(s) in the land but exclusively Yahweh. The first three stipulations of the Sinaitic covenant deal with this. As pointed in chapter 3, these are the only three stipulations of the covenant that have parallels with that of the ANE treaty. In the ANE treaty, the great king demands the absolute and exclusive loyalty from his vassal king. If the vassal king breaks the covenant by making a treaty with other kings, the dreadful covenant curses of destruction and exile would fall on him and his kingdom. In the Sinaitic covenant, Yahweh demands absolute and exclusive loyalty from his people Israel (Dt 6:4). For the Dtr, the breaking of the first stipulation ("you shall have no other gods") by committing the sin of going after other gods was the *de facto* reason for Israel's exile. All the surrounding nations practiced idolatrous worship. So for the Dtr, the breaking of the first stipulation automatically leads to the breaking of the second stipulation – "you shall not make yourself an idol ..." and the third stipulation – "you shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God ..." (blasphemy).

Therefore, idolatry is a generic term for the breaking of these first three stipulations of the land covenant. The first stipulation of the covenant prohibits the Israelites from making any treaty with any other god (worship of any other god), thereby eliminating the false forms of idolatrous religious practice of the neighboring nations. The second stipulation forbids the worship of Yahweh in the form of an image or idol. Blasphemy is also associated with idolatry. Through the

prophet Ezekiel, Yahweh condemned the Israelites for their idolatrous behavior, which in his eyes was as a blasphemy:

This is what the Sovereign Lord says, In this also your fathers blasphemed me by forsaking me: When I brought them into the land I had sworn to give them and they saw any high hill or any leafy tree, there they offered their sacrifices, made offering that provoked me to anger, presented their fragrant incense and poured out their drink offerings" (Eze 20:27b-28; cf. Ex 22:27; ET v. 28; Lev 24:11-16; Nu 15:30; Ne 9:18, 26-27).¹

Idolatry includes prostitution and other detestable things, reaching its climax with human (child) sacrifice (Lev 18:21; Dt 18:9-13; 1 Ki 3:26-27). King Manasseh evidently sacrificed his sons to Molech, the god of the Ammonites (2 Ch 33:6; 2 Ki 23:10; cf. Lev 20:2-5; 1 Ki 11:5). Jeremiah strongly condemned the practice (Jer 32:35). The curse for idolatry is swift – immediate exile:

After you have had children and grand-children and have lived in the land a long time – if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the Lord your God and provoking him to anger, I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed (Dt 4:25-26; cf. vv. 27-28; 15-19).

Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the Lord's anger will burn against you, and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is giving you (Dt 11:16-17).

If you violate the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the Lord's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you (Jos 23:16).

The message was loud and clear; idolatry would mean quick exile from the land (see also Ex 32:2-35; 6:14-15; 28:63; 30:18; 1 Ki 9:7; 14:15; Jer 12:14; ET v. 16).² Despite these repeated warnings, from the golden calf in the wilderness (Ex 32) and the foreign gods during the conquest and settlement (Jos 24:23) to the witches of Endor (consulted by Saul) (1 Sa 28) through the high places of Solomon (1 Ki 11:1ff.) and Jeroboam and his successors (1 Ki 12-14; 2 Ch 13; *passim*), for the Dtr, it was this sin of idolatry that the kings and the people of Israel had committed again and again generation after generation throughout their history. The priestly view also presents idolatry as the detestable thing that defiles the land that will result in desolation and barrenness of the land and the people scattering from it (Lev 26:1-39).

¹ The punishment for blasphemy, rejecting God by cursing him (his name) is capital for individuals (Lev 24:11-16) and exile for the nation (Ne 9:26-27). The law had been misused to wrongfully accuse one (e.g., Naboth, 1 Ki 21) and is intimidated (e.g., Job's wife urged him to end his life, which had become unbearable, by committing blasphemy). The specific communication from God specifying the penalty to be imposed on the blasphemer of Lev 24:11 serves to dramatize the concept, basic priestly literature, that all the particulars of religious law were communicated by God to Moses (cf. B A Levine, *Leviticus*, The JPS Torah Commentary [Philadelphia: JPS], 166).

² The expression "perish from the land" [אָבד מִן הָאָרֶץ] in these texts, which is used to denote exile, is also found in Hittite and Assyrian covenant texts (cf. E F Weidner, *Politische Dokumente aus Kleinasien* [Leipzig, 1923], 34; S Parpola & K Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, State Archives of Assyria 2 [Helsinki, 1988], 51 (cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 194).

Von Rad and Brueggemann assert that idolatry or images also mean making controllable representations of one's best loyalties and visions.³ For Brueggemann, these images are efforts to reduce to manageable and predictable forms the sources of value and power in one's life:

Surely images are a peculiar temptation to the landed. Characteristically when one is able to plan and manage everything else, one yearns to make a comfortable place in life even for ultimate values which can be managed. Thus mystery is reduced to manageable size. God is put at the disposal of his people. Transcendence is domesticated. When the land is fully controlled, it is easy to imagine that the land has been generated by the community and can be used on its own objectives (Dt 8:17).⁴

Intermarriage is also associated with idolatry, as the pagan wives who worship idols would influence their husbands and society towards idolatry. Intermarriage is, therefore, prohibited. Because of this, in the DH the threat of exile also appears in connection with intermarriage with the non-Israelites who had remained in the land:

But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, then you may be sure that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you (Jos 23:12-13).

Ezra, from a priestly point of view, regards intermarriage with the non-Israelites as defiling the land that will lead to their own destruction:

But now, O our God, what can we say after this? We have disregarded the commands you gave through your servants the prophets when you said: 'The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its people. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other. Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it to your children as an everlasting inheritance.' What happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and have given us a remnant like this. Shall we again break your commands and intermarry with the peoples who commit such detestable practices? Would you not be angry enough with us to destroy us, leaving us no remnant or survivor? (Ezr 9:10-13).

Marriage is a kind of treaty. We have discussed above how their foreign wives have led Solomon and Ahab to idol worship. These pagan wives were stumbling blocks in Israel's journey towards the exclusive worship of Yahweh in the promised land. For Ezra, his "decision to establish the prohibition of intermarriage as the first and foremost condition for national existence was in keeping with his lifework: the expulsion of foreign wives from the society and the separation of the community of the Israelites from foreign nations"⁵ (cf. Ne 9:2). However, there are cases when marrying a foreign woman is accepted on the ground that the foreign woman becomes a worshipper of Yahweh (eg, Ruth). Christians marrying non-Christians in the New Testament may be analogous to intermarriage of the Old Testament, as the non-Christian spouse can lead astray his/her Christian spouse (2 Cor 6:14). Materialism and religious syncretism, to some

³ G von Rad, *Old Testament Theology I* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 211-19; Brueggemann, *The Land*, 62.

⁴ Brueggemann, *The Land*, 62.

⁵ Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 196.

extent, can also be regarded as a form of idolatry today in this age of capitalist consumerism and religious plurality.

4.3. HOLINESS

As discussed above, the fourth to tenth (seven) stipulations of the Sinaitic covenant that deal with laws of morality or a holy living in a holy land are peculiarly Israel. In the priestly views, the breaking of the holiness codes were the main reasons for Israel’s exile. How these stipulations (laws) are concerned with a holy living can be well understood from the fact that all of them are elaborated and incorporated into the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26).⁶ Levine observes that the Holiness Code, with its emphasis on the interdependence of all Israelites in every aspect of life, including their history and shared destiny, resembles the other two major collections of the laws and commandments found in the Torah, the Book of the Covenant (Ex 20:19-23:33) and the Deuteronomic laws (primarily Dt 12-28). He then tabulates their similarities as follows⁷:

Table 5: Similarities between the Holiness Code, Book of the Covenant, and Deuteronomy

Theme	Holiness Code	Book of the Covenant	Deuteronomy
Prologue: proper modes of worship	Lev 17	Ex 20:19-23	Dt 12
Epilogue: blessings and execrations	Lev 26:3-46	Ex 23:20-33	Dt 27-30
Duties that pertain to the land	Lev 19:9f.; 25	Ex 23:10-11	Dt 15; 24:19-22; 26
A calendar of sacred occasions	Lev 23	Ex 23:12-19	Dt 16:1-7

Before we will analyze the stipulations of the covenant that demand a holy life for the people Israel, it is necessary to study first the concept of the promised land as a holy land, as that is the basis for the demand of a holy living for the people who would live there.

A Holy Land

The Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem. Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling (Zec 2:16-17; ET vv. 12-13).

Although this is the only place the promised land is explicitly and literally referred to as אֶרֶץ קֹדֶשׁ (the holy land), there are numerous passages that communicate the holiness concept of the promised land (eg, Dtr texts: Ex 15:13; Jos 5:15; 22:19; 2 Ki 5:17; Isa 64:9; Hos 9:3-4; Am 7:17;

⁶ The term “Holiness Code” was first used in 1877 by August Klosterman, but the most convenient reference is the same author’s *Der Pentateuch* Vol 1 (Leipzig: Deichert, 1893), 368, 418 (cited in Levine, *Leviticus*, 110). The reason these texts are called the Holiness Code is because of the fact that in Leviticus the theme of holiness is rare outside these texts, being virtually restricted to 11:44-45, but within these texts it occurs frequently (cf. 20:7-8; 21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32).
⁷ Levine, *Leviticus*, 111.

Zec 14:20-21; Psalms: Ps 78:54; 114:2; 137:4; and P: Lev 18:25-28; Nu 35:33-34; cf. Ezr 6:21; 9:8; Eze 4:14). The term הַר הַקֹּדֶשׁ (“the holy mountain”) specifically refers to the Mount Zion of Jerusalem where the temple stands (Isa 66:20; Joel 4:17; Zec 8:3; Ps 2:6; 48:2; Da 9:16, 20; 11:45; cf. Isa 27:13; 56:7; 65:11; Joel 2:1), but its variations often also refer to the entire land of Israel (Isa 11:9; 57:13; 65:25; Jer 31:23; Ob 16; Zep 3:11; cf. Isa 27:13; Joel 2:1; Ps 87:1). The city of Jerusalem is also called holy (Isa 48:2; 52:1; Ps 46:5; Da 9:24; Ne 11:1, 18).⁸ Jeremiah envisages the increased holiness for the new covenant community of the “new” city (Jer 31:38-40; cf. Zec 40:20-21; Is 52:1; Joel 4:17; Ne 3:1; 12:27). Even if the holiness concept is confined specifically to the Temple and Jerusalem City in many cases mentioned above, it does not necessarily exclude the land. In the Holiness Code, the holiness is extended beyond the tabernacle and its sacred area to the whole land and the people living on the land, whereas the priestly view of holiness is most intense at the center and decreasing in force as it reaches the periphery.⁹ Thus the whole territory of Israel, for that matter, the whole earth, with the temple at the center, is a Holy Land (Isa 6:3). The Mishnah graphically defines this concept as follow:

The land of Israel is holier than any other land. Wherein lies its holiness? In that from it they may bring the ‘Omer, the first fruits, and the two loaves, which they may not bring from any other land. The walled cities are even holier, in that they must send forth the lepers from their midst ... Within the wall is even holier, for they may eat the lesser holy things and the second tithe. The Temple Mount is even holier, for no man or woman that has a flux, no menstruant, and no woman after childbirth may enter therein. The hyl [rampart] is even holier, for no non-Jew and no one who has been near a corpse may enter therein. The court of the women is even holier, for no one that had immersed himself that day may enter therein ... The court of the Israelites is even holier, for no one whose atonement is yet incomplete may enter therein ... The court of the priests is even holier, for the Israelites may not enter therein ... Between the porch and the altar is even holier, for no one may enter therein with hands and feet unwashed. The holy of holies is the holiest of all, for no one may enter therein except the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.¹⁰

However, when the promised land is referred to as a holy land, it does not refer to the concept of holiness inherent in the land itself; it is Yahweh’s laws of holiness that are binding upon anything that has to do with the promise of the land, as holiness is a quality that belongs solely to God; no thing or being is holy intrinsically; God alone, the Supreme Being, is a קֹדֶשׁ (“Holy One”).¹¹ Nevertheless, in a derivative or secondary sense, things or living beings may be “made holy” (sanctified, consecrated) when they are drawn into God’s sphere of holiness or when they

⁸ See also David P Wright, “Holiness,” *ABD* Vol 3 (1992), 243.

⁹ Cf., Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 123. Anderson observes that this is the fundamental difference between the P and the Holiness Code; perhaps the latter is the earlier independent source that is incorporated into the P book of Leviticus. For further discussion on the history of research on the Holiness Code, see John E Hartley, “Leviticus,” *WBC* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 251-260.

¹⁰ Cf. Mishnah Kelim 1:6-9 (quoted in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 219-220).

¹¹ Cf. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 122; Moshe Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 203. Weinfeld asserts that the Rabbis support the concept of the holiness of the land in terms of laws of holiness. He also observes that the idea of “holy land” in Zec 2:12-13 is rather “the holy territory” in parallel to that for Jerusalem, “the holy city.” “The actual meaning of this expression is *the territory/earth of the holy* – in other words, the ground belonging to the holy area (the Temple and Temple city); it does not mean “holy land,” since such a concept does not appear in the Old Testament (*italics his*). Weinfeld, however, acknowledges that the term “Holy Land” does appear in the Apocrypha and in Philo; cf. 2 Macc 1:7; Wisd. of Sol. 12:3; The Testament of Job 33:5; 2 Baruch 63:10, 84:8; Sybilline Oracles 3:267; Philo, *The Heir* 293; *Special Laws* (*ιερα χωρα*); 4, 215; *On Dreams* 2, 75.

are brought into relationship with the holy God.¹² The tabernacle, the temple, the city Jerusalem, the promised land, the priests, and the people of Israel, therefore, can be called holy in this sense. Therefore, I will use capitals, “Holy Land,” to emphasize the concept of it’s being made holy.

Because the promised land is a Holy Land, it should not be defiled; so the people who live there are required to relate to the land and Yahweh in holiness. Sins that defile the Holy Land would be judged severely - individually (Dt 29:18-21) by death or removal from the land and nationally by implementing the covenant curses on the nation - exile (Lev 26:14-45; Dt 27:12-26; 28:15-68). We will discuss the fourth stipulation of the Sabbath observance, which also deals with the holiness aspect below under the condition of land sharing. In what follows, we will discuss the last six stipulations of holy living along with other areas of morality that are demanded of the Israelites.

4.3.1. Dishonoring parents defiles the Holy Land

The Israelites are commanded by Yahweh in the fifth stipulation of the covenant to honor their parents so that they may live long and that it may go well with them in the land he is giving them. “Cursed is the man who dishonors his father and mother” (Dt 27:16). Cursing parents and having sexual intercourse with one’s father’s wife are specifically spelled out as acts of dishonoring parents (Ex 20:12; 21:15, 17; Lev 18:7-8; 20:9; Dt 5:16; 21:18). The biblical sources record serious case of dishonoring parents and their consequent curses – Noah’s son Canaan (Ge 9:20-25), Jacob’s son Reuben (Ge 35:21; 49:3-4), Eli’s children (1 Sa 2:12-26) and David’s son Absalom (2 Sa 13-18).

Having witnessed the disintegration of family units, Micah foresees the destruction of Zion: “For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man’s enemies are the members of his own household” (Mic 7:6). For Isaiah and Malachi, the commandment is applied to Israel’s relationship with God, and she is rebuked for dishonoring God her father. Typologically applying the proverbial cursing of one’s parents to the Israelite’s cursing of God for the suffering of destruction and exile they are going through, Isaiah thundered:

“Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you making?’ Does your work say, ‘He has no hands’? Woe to him who says to his father, ‘What have you begotten?’ or to his mother, ‘What have you brought to birth?’ (Isa 45:9-10).

¹² For a summary but informative discussion of holiness, see Anderson, *Contours of the Old Testament*, 122-127.

In Malachi, it was the priests themselves who are the people's representatives to God commit the sin of dishonoring God the father:

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due to me?" says the Lord Almighty. "It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name. But you ask, 'How have we shown contempt for your name?' You place defiled food on my altar. But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?' By saying that the Lord's table is contemptible" (Mal 1:6-7).

In 1 Samuel 2:30, we read that Yahweh will honor those who honor him and disdain those who despise him. One of the areas in which one is to honor Yahweh is through honoring one's parents, which includes taking care of them when they become old or unable to work and earn their living. In some cases, taking care of one's parents may not necessarily require financial responsibilities, but time and a loving and caring relationship. The promised land, and for that matter, this planet earth, is a place where parents must be honored regardless of changing culture and custom. Not only one's parents, other older people too must be honored and respected. Sad to say, let alone respecting older people, honoring one's own parents has become a thing of the past in many quarters today. A headline in the *Cape Times* (newspaper) reads: "Elderly woman vanishes from house after relative discusses old age home."¹³ This is the tip of the iceberg of stories of the neglected and lonely parents of this generation. It is dawning that the scriptural teaching on honoring parents needs a strong reemphasis.

4.3.2. Shedding of blood defiles the Holy Land

The sixth stipulation of the covenant prohibits murder in the promised land. In the priestly view, murder must not be committed because blood that is shed pollutes the land and defiles it.

Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it. Do not defile the land where you live and where I dwell, for I, the Lord, dwell among the Israelites (Nu 35:33-34).

This view of the defilement of the land by bloodshed that leads to the desolation and expulsion of its inhabitants is ancient. In Genesis 4:10-12 cf. 9:6, because of the blood of Abel the land is cursed and will not yield its produce. In 2 Samuel 21:1-14, the land suffered a three-year famine because of the bloodguilt of Saul's killing of the Gibeonites. Because of the curse of the bloodshed the Gilboa mountains received neither dew nor rain (2 Sa 1:21-22). This curse of dryness and expulsion for murder is also found in other ANE literature.¹⁴ Not only the Israelites

¹³ *Cape Times*, October 22, 2001, 3.

¹⁴ For example, the curse of Aghat of Danel concerning his son's murderer in the Ugaritic epic reads: "No dew, no rain, no upsurge of the deep." The Hittite king declares that the gods have avenged the murdered king's blood by causing the murderer's land no longer yielding its produce. The Greek land of Thebes was cursed because Oedipus had murdered his father. In the treaty from Sefire between the king of Katak and the king of Arpad that locusts and worms will consume the produce of the land, no grass or vegetation will be seen, the sound of the lyre will not be

are cursed because of their shedding of blood, anyone who sheds the blood is under the same curse. Ezekiel and Habakkuk warned Edom (Eze 35:5-6) and Babylon (Hab 2:12) of the curse they were invoking on themselves because of their shedding of the Israelites' blood. In Proverbs 6:16-17, we read that the Lord hates "hands that shed innocent blood."

Not only the shedding of human blood is forbidden, eating of animal blood is also forbidden because blood is [a symbol of] life (נפש כל בשר דמן, literally, the life of all flesh is [its] blood, Lev Lev 17:10-16; Dt 12:23; Ge 9:4). Sexual intercourse with a menstruant woman is also prohibited on the same ground (Lev 18:29) of reverence for blood. As regards the blood of the criminals who are killed under the capital punishment, this will not defile the land because it is under God's sanction. Even then, the remains of criminals who are executed, and then hung on a tree, must be buried before the sunset (Dt 21:22-23; cf. Ge 40:19).

Every country today has a law against murder. Some countries exercise capital punishment for the crime of murder. They also exercise the same punishment for other big offences. Opinions are divided concerning the wisdom and ethics of the practice of capital punishment, which is definitely the shedding of blood. The Old Testament does advocates capital punishment for crimes that deserve it. But there are also some instances where love and forgiveness is preferred over revenge. Israel fails as individuals; Israel fails as a nation (Pr 20:9; Jer 2:22; 13:23; 17:9); without God's forgiveness there is no hope for the future (Jer 31:34; Eze 36:25-27; 37:1-14; Ps 25:8f.; 32:5, 8; 51:10, 13; Is 1:18-20; 52:13-53:12).¹⁵ If God forgives them, then they must also forgive one another. In Leviticus 19:18, the Lord tells the Israelites not to take revenge but to love their neighbors as themselves: "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord" (cf. Ex 20:16). In many cases, this "neighbor" is exclusively a fellow Israelite. However, there are other instances where "neighbor" is inclusive of all fellow human beings. For example, Proverbs 27:10 says, "better is a neighbor near by than a brother far." In this sense, neighbor is anyone with whom one comes in contact. Rabbi Nahmanides includes all fellow human beings in one's neighborhood: "One should place no limitations upon the love for the neighbor, but instead a person should love to do an abundance of good for his fellow beings as he does for himself."¹⁶ The promised land, and for that matter, this planet earth, is where people must respect life and live together in neighborly

heard, and the land will become a wasteland, overrun by wild animals should the king of Arpad break the covenant. In Israel, dryness is not only the curse of murder, also of other sins that defile the land (Hos 4:2-3; Isa 24:4ff. Lev 26:20-22) (cf. Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 189-193; and ANE texts and extensive literatures cited there).

¹⁵ Cf. Christopher J H Wright, *Living as the People of God: The Relevance of the Old Testament Ethics* (Leicester: IVP, 1983), 208-212.

¹⁶ Quoted in R Laird Harris and Ronald Youngblood, "Leviticus," *The Compact NIV Study Bible* (1985), 170.

love and peace. As the author, God alone has the power to give life and to take it back; thus no human has the right to take his or her own life or the lives of other fellow human beings.

4.3.3. Adultery and all other sexual perversions defile the Holy Land

The seventh stipulation of the covenant forbids the Israelites from committing adultery (sex outside marriage; cf. Dt 22:22;), which includes fornication (sex without marriage) (cf. Dt 22:23-29) in the promised land in order to preserve the sanctity of sex and marriage. In the Holiness Code sexual sins that defile the promised land includes various forms of incest (18:6-18; cf. 20:10-21), homosexual relationship between men (18:22; 20:3) (nothing is said about lesbian relationship), and bestiality (18:23). Adultery, no doubt, is a sin against God and against a marriage partner (Ge 39:9; Ps 51:4; cf. 2 Sam 11:4; 12:13). According to Deuteronomy 22:20-21, by committing fornication, an unmarried woman has done a disgraceful thing in Israel. Nothing is said about the men with whom she committed that fornication act. But this does not mean that fornication is not wrong for the unmarried men, as the following verses (23-29) clearly imply that it is a sin both for unmarried men and for women. The prohibition of incest, according to anthropologists, is common in almost every society to protect the identity and vitality of the social group.¹⁷ No society accepts bestiality as a normal thing. But when it comes to homosexual practice, opinions are divided today.

Jacob Milgrom argues that “the ban on homosexuality and other illicit unions (in Leviticus 18) applied solely to the residents of the holy land.” “What is the symbolism of the holy land? It is the sphere of God, like his temple in Jerusalem. In this theology, all those who live in God’s extended temple – the holy land – are accountable to a *higher moral* and ritual *standard*.”¹⁸ Anderson, using Milgrom’s argument as his support, seems to incline to say that homosexuality is a sin for the people of the Holy Land only, but not for the people outside the Holy Land, including Christians today, as many of the Levitical laws are not applicable to Christians.¹⁹ Anderson would appear to have overlooked Milgrom’s point. If no indulgence in homosexual practice is a sign of a *higher moral standard*, then indulgence is clearly a sign of a low moral standard. Even if a homosexual orientation (born homosexual), if there is any, in itself is not a

¹⁷ The anthropologists’ finding is cited in Anderson, *Contours of the Old Testament*, 125.

¹⁸ J Milgrom, “Does the Bible Prohibit Homosexuality?” *BR* 9 (December 1993), 11 (quoted in Anderson, *Contours of the Old Testament*, 126, emphasis added).

¹⁹ Anderson, *Contours of the Old Testament*, 126-127.

sin, both the Old and New Testaments clearly say that homosexual practice is a sin in God's eyes (Lev 18:22; 20:13 cf. Ro 1:26-27; 1 Co 6:18).²⁰

One sin leads to another, especially in the case of sexual sin. David could have avoided the sin of adultery with Bathsheba had he not stayed home when he was supposed to go off to war. He then tried to cheat Uriah to "father" his (David's) child. When he did not succeed, he then misused his power to protect his honor and murdered Uriah (2 Sa 11-12). It is virtually impossible to exaggerate how sexually sinful and perverted the world we are living in is. No warning can be more serious than the threat of HIV/AIDS. Still so many people do not heed the warning. A friend from Botswana recently narrated about the government of Botswana's efforts to civilize the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert. The irony is these Bushmen are those who really love and care for one another, who are really faithful to their spouses, who respect and treat their land and nature well, and where the HIV/AIDS prevalence is almost zero. Are not these Bushmen the ones who are truly civilized people?²¹

4.3.4. Stealing, false accusation and covetousness defile the Holy Land

The eighth, ninth, and tenth stipulations of the land covenant forbid the Israelites from stealing, giving a false oath, and coveting in the promised land: "You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet..." (Ex 20:15-17; cf. Dt 5:19-21). We shall study these three stipulations together as they are related to one another in one way or the other. In one way, the tenth or last stipulation covers all other moral stipulations. If there is no covetousness, there will be no adultery, no murder, no stealing, and no false accusation. In today's language, the term "dishonesty" or "corruption" may cover all these three sins.

Stealing is one of the biggest problems facing many countries today – from cheating in primary classrooms to corruption in the "high places" (government and public leaders, some church and Christian organization leaders are no exceptions). Compared with money and property lost by corruption cases of multiple kinds (fraud, cheating, bribery, commission, misappropriation, so on and so forth) in "high places," the amount lost in petty theft and armed robbery is nothing.

²⁰ For further discussions on homosexuality, see Brian Edwards, ed., *Homosexuality: The Straight Agenda*. Facing the Issues (Epsom, Surrey: Day One Publications, 1998). As the topic would suggest, homosexual practice is a sin in this work, which is a part of a series of publications of issues facing the contemporary Church.

²¹ See also an interesting article "Going back to their roots," by Tony Weaver (reporter) and Paul Weinberg (photographer), *Mail & Guardian* (South African edition), Vol 17, No 35 (August 31- September 6, 2001), 14. The article reports how the Bushmen's social fabrics have been severely affected by forcefully removing them from their

Money stolen by the pen is far more than money stolen by the gun. Corruption in “high places” is lamented to be the cause of poverty in many countries. A Kenyan scholar, George Kinoti, observes that during the colonial time, Africans did not think of taking money and things from the colonial offices and masters as stealing because those things in the first place belonged to the Africans. They were just taking back what originally belonged to them. So “stealing” money and property back from the colonials was even regarded as a patriotic act. But sad to say, the same mentality continues in many countries even after their independence; they treat their own governments the way they treated the colonial rulers – the one who is in a position to exploit government property is regarded as a privileged person. Kinoti then regretfully concludes: “Independent Africa has experienced more violence, violation of human rights, corruption, injustice, and oppression than did colonial Africa, *and so is corrupting its way into exile.*”²² There is even a notion in some cultures that one does not steal from an alien, but from brothers only, which means taking money or things belonging to aliens is not stealing. Public property and foreign aid become fertile grounds for corruption as they are in this sense “alien” properties.

As the land is God’s gift, in Deuteronomy 14:22-29 we read that every Israelite must bring the annual tithes (vv. 22-27) and triennial poor tithes (vv.28-29) to the Lord from their harvests (cf. 26:12-19; Lev 27:30; Mic 6:8). But Israel cheated and/or failed. According to the prophet Malachi, transgressing the laws of giving tithes is regarded as stealing from God. Those who failed to give tithes are categorically called robbers:

“Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’ Will a man *rob* God? Yet you *rob* me. But you ask, ‘How do we *rob* you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse – the whole nation of you – because you are *robbing* me” (Mal 3:7-9) (emphases added).

The curse for failure to give tithes is more or less the same as that of the curse for murder – famine in the land. Pests destroying crops and so the field producing no harvest are explicitly spelled out as the consequences of failure to give tithes:

“Bring the whole tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the Lord Almighty. “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord almighty (vv.10-12).

This must have surely be the reason the second temple period Jews were very careful in giving a tithe of everything (Mt 23:23; Lk 11:42). The New Testament does not abolish tithing, and many Christians today who practice it are experiencing the blessings of it.

lands and relocating them in the alien lands and cultures. The article also reports efforts to let the Bushmen live the way they choose in their lands.

²² George Kinoti, *Hope for Africa and what the Church can do* (Nairobi: Africa Institute for Scientific Research and Development, 1994), 37 (italics added).

False oath: In order to prevent wrongful convictions, one witness alone is not enough; two or more witnesses are required (Dt 19:15-21). Even then, two or more can still agree to falsely witness as we have seen in the false accusation of Naboth in 1 Kings 21:10, 13. The procedure for finding out a false testimony is not clear. Deuteronomy 19:18-19 says: “The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against his brother, then do to him as he intended to do to his brother. You must purge the evil from among you.” It is probable that difficult cases will involve decision making by Urim and Thumim. In Leviticus 19:11b-13 we find telling lies, deceiving one another, swearing falsely by God’s name, defrauding and robbing one’s neighbor, and holding back the wages of a hired man are grouped together under falsehood or dishonesty. The “might is right” system still rules in some quarters of society today. We have heard of cases of false oaths that implicate innocent people in the place of “mighty” ones. Instead of the best policy, honesty is becoming the lost policy. Integrity is a virtue that cannot be achieved overnight but which takes a lifelong commitment. Skillfulness is a science that takes a long time to learn and experience. David shepherded the Israelites with integrity of heart and led them with skillful hands (Ps 78:72). Leaders with integrity of heart and skillful hands *command* respect while dishonest and incompetent leaders *demand* respect. The world today needs “Davids”.

As it is clearly spelled out in the tenth stipulation, **covetousness** or **greed** is the root of many sins: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, you shall not set your desire on your neighbor’s house or land, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” Coveting one’s neighbor’s wife will lead to committing adultery. Coveting one’s neighbor’s property (house, land, manservant, maidservant, ox, donkey, or anything that belongs to the neighbor) will lead to stealing, false accusation, and even murder. Especially when it comes to land, as we have discussed above, everyone, including kings, easily becomes greedy. Greed also leads to economic exploitation as we have read in the lines of Amos.

Economic capitalization and globalization – to make endless profit – is the biggest manifestation of modern day greed. Many employees of different companies are being retrenched for the sake of the profit making. Local products cannot sell, as they are unable to compete with that of the global companies. While some people are starving, billions of dollars are sitting idle in different banks of the world. Money saved seems far greater than money spent. Greed leads to capitalization, capitalization leads to globalization and globalization adds more and more greed. This makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. My father was a farmer. Like all other villagers, he practiced shifting farm cultivation. With timely rain, no storms, no pests, he would normally harvest grain enough to sustain the whole family for the year with some extra to share with the

needy and for his children's schooling. The family lived in a timber house with thatched roof and raised pigs and chicken for food and also for children's schooling. My father never knew or thought that he was a poor man. Then came so-called civilization and development, measured in terms of the western value system influenced by capital-global development and economic standards. He suddenly became "poor" (and uncivilized as well?). Was my father poor? I am afraid there are millions in the world today who have become poor in the same way my father was. This global standardization of rich and poor causes many rural people in Asia, Africa and Latin America to migrate to cities in the hope of becoming civilized, developed, and prosperous, only to end up in more poverty than ever before.²³

Although the promise of land is for blessing (we will discuss this in detail in chapter 5), the Israelites were warned of the danger of becoming materialists by focusing on and enjoying too many material blessings and forgetting the giver of those blessings:

When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you – a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant – then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery (Dt 6:10-12).

Materialism remains the strongest weapon to weaken and destroy the Church, as was the case with many Western churches of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Poverty in many cases is not so much material poverty as it is moral and attitude poverty. A content person is in fact a true rich person. Paul has clearly caught its sentiment: "But godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim 6:6).

4.4. RIGTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE

This condition is closely related to the next condition of land sharing, as the deprivation of land is the epitome of injustice that can possibly be done to an agrarian family. However, we will study it separately here, as, apart from sharing of the land, the theme also entails other areas in which justice must be pursued. The promised land is meant to be a place where God's laws are carried out and where society pursues righteousness and justice (Dt 4:5-8) and lives in harmony with Yahweh (Dt 7:12-13).

²³ Even in Christianity, theological and denominational globalizations are creating superiority and inferiority complexes among seminaries and churches. In some regions or countries, there are coveted denominations because they have plenty of money that comes from their global denominational headquarters. Globalized and/or regionalized standardization of theological education makes some local theologies irrelevant and some theological schools/colleges/seminaries inferior.

For the prophets, especially the classical prophets, failure to pursue righteousness and justice was the main reason for Israel's forfeiture of the promised land. From the very time a land was promised to Abraham, it was made clear that Abraham and his descendants must pursue righteousness and justice in the promised land. In conjunction with his revelation to Abraham about the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Yahweh said:

Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to *keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just*, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised (Ge 18:19; emphasis added).

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed before Abraham's eyes because those cities did not practice righteousness and justice; "they did not help the poor and needy" (Eze 16:49). In the same way, if Abraham and his descendants do not follow the path of righteousness and justice, they too will forfeit the promised land.

The Hebrew word for righteousness is צדק, which is found in two common forms, צדק and צדקה. Its "root meaning is probably 'straight': something which is fixed and fully what it should be and so matches a 'norm'. It is used literally of actual objects when they are, or do, what they are supposed to: for example, accurate weights and measures (Lev 19:36; Dt 25:15) and straight paths (Ps 23:3). So it comes to mean rightness, that which ought to be so, that which matches up to the standard – 'righteousness' in a very wide sense."²⁴ The Hebrew word for justice (משפט) comes from the root verb שפט (to judge, which can mean "to act as a lawgiver; to act as a judge by arbitrating between parties in a dispute; to pronounce judgment; declaring guilty and innocent respectively; to execute judgment in carrying out the legal consequences of such a verdict"²⁵); hence שפטים (judges) to minister משפט in Israel. Wright correctly analyzes the relationship between משפט and צדק:

The noun משפט can describe the whole process of litigation, or its end result of verdict and its execution; it can mean a legal ordinance, usually case law, based on past precedents (Ex 21-23, known as the Covenant Code, or Book of the Covenant, is called in Hebrew simply משפטים); it can also be used in a more personal sense as one's legal right, the cause or case one is bringing as a plaintiff. It is from this last sense in particular that משפט comes to have the wider sense of 'justice' in the somewhat subjective sense, whereas צדק has a more objective flavour. משפט is what needs to be done in a given situation if people and circumstances are to be restored to conformity with צדק/צדקה.²⁶

The people of the promised land must pursue righteousness and social justice because Yahweh whom they would worship in the land is a righteous and just God (Ps 89:14) who demands the same from his people. Yahweh's righteousness and justice is also related to his holiness [קדש] itself: "The Lord Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself

²⁴ Cf. Wright, *Living as the People of God*, 134.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ *ibid.*, 134. Hebrew words are mine. Wright uses transliterations.

holy by his righteousness” (Isa 5:16). Yahweh’s righteousness is related also to his steadfastness (steadfast love) or loving kindness [חסד], his faithfulness or truthfulness [אמונה/אמת], and his peace [שלום]. חסד and צדקה are frequently used as parallels to demonstrate Yahweh’s character-action that demands human response for the same (Ps 36:10; Hos 10:12; Mic 6:8). If there is righteousness, there will be שלום (peace, not just the absence of war but the completeness, wholeness, and total well being for one’s life). The wisdom Psalm delightfully portrays their inevitable relationship as follows: חסד ואמת נפגשו צדק ושלום נשקו (“Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other” Ps 85:11; ET v.10; cf. Ge 18:25;). From these semantic studies, it is clear that “righteousness and justice in the Old Testament thought are no abstract ideas. They are highly personal and relational terms. Theologically, they characterize God in action in relationship with men – men at large, and especially his own people. Socially, they are required of people in their relationship with one another.”²⁷

Although a surface and isolated reading of texts such as Jeremiah 12:1; Habakkuk 1:12f.; Job 11; and Psalms 73 would portray God as practicing injustices, a closer reading within their larger contexts will show that, at the end of the day, theodicy (from Greek *theos*, “God,” and *dikē*, “justice”), that is, faith in the all-powerful, all-loving, and the ultimate justice of Yahweh, prevails and sustains, despite evil’s existence, because the only alternative would be moral chaos and futility²⁸ (cf. Ps 145:9-18; 146:6-9; 147:4-6).

Although the sins of murder, adultery, and idolatry (cf. Jer 7:9; 22:3) are included in the reasons for their destruction and exile, for the classical prophets the violation of social justice was a paramount reason for Israel’s exile. Look at Isaiah’s effective word play (rhyme) on the depressing injustice situation of the land (Isa 5:7):

וַיִּקֹּר לְמִשְׁפָּט	And he looked for justice (<i>mišpāt</i>),
וַיִּהְיֶה מִשְׁפָּח	but rather saw oppression (<i>mišpāh</i>);
לְצִדְקָה	for righteousness (<i>šēdāqāh</i>),
וַיִּהְיֶה צַעֲקָה	but rather heard a cry of distress (<i>šē‘āqāh</i>) (my translations).

Isaiah, then, goes on to warn of the impending exile because the rich and powerful are enjoying luxury at the expense of the poor and powerless: “They have harps and lyres at their banquets, tambourines and flutes and wine, but they have no regard for the deeds of the Lord, no respect

²⁷ Cf. *ibid*, 135-136.

²⁸ Cf. J S Feinberg, “Theodicy,” *CEDT* (1991), 505-507; Wright, *Living as the People of God*, 137.

for the work of his hands. Therefore my people will go into exile for lack of understanding; their men of rank will die of hunger and their masses will be parched with thirst” (Isa 5:12-13).

Amos, the prophet of social justice, is even more thunderous in his warning of exile: “You who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground... You trample the poor and force him to give you grain... Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream... *lest* I will send you into exile”²⁹ (Am 5:7-27; italics added). “You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph.”³⁰ Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile” (6:6-7).

Micah and Jeremiah warned of destruction and barrenness for social injustices:

Hear this, you leaders of the house of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right; who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness. Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they lean upon the Lord and say, “Is not the Lord among us? No disaster will come upon us.” Therefore because of you, Zion will be ploughed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets (Mic 3:9-12; cf. 2:1f., 8f.; 3:1-3, 6:8-16; 7:2f.).

If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place..., then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave to your forefathers.... While you were doing all these things..., I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen.... Therefore, ... I will thrust you from my presence, just as I did all your brothers, the people of Ephraim (Jer 7:5-15; cf. 21:12-14; 22:3-5, 13-17).

Weinfeld asserts: “What is unique about classical prophecy is that it elevated social morality to the level of one of the basic conditions for the survival of the nation in its land, contrary to the popular view, which held that what God most required was cultic worship (cf. Jer 7:21-22).”³¹

It is true that the prophets had strong biases in their support for the poor and the weak. There are at least four common categories of the poor (though all are related) in the Old Testament for whom the prophets unashamedly stood: the עני (poor, economically oppressed and exploited; it is the most common term for the poor in the OT and in prophetic literature – 80 times in OT and 25 in prophets; often paired with אֶבְיָן, eg, Isa 3:15, 10:2, 32:7), אֶבְיָן (needy, destitute, beggar, maltreated and economically exploited by leaders of the society; mentioned 60 times in OT and 17 in prophets, eg, Isa 14:30, 29:19, 32:6-7, Eze 22:29; Am 2:6), רֵעֵם (landless peasant; occurs

²⁹ The prophet Amos was the first to use the term גִּלָּה for exile. This term is not used in the Pentateuch. Amos prophesied during the period when the Assyrians started to exile the populations of defeated nations (cf. B Obed, *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* [Wiesbaden, 1979]; cited in Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 197).

³⁰ It is not very clear which ruin or destruction the prophet is talking here. It could be that the Southern Kingdom did not grieve (instead rejoicing?) over the coming destruction of the Northern Kingdom dominated by the tribe of Ephraim, descendants of Joseph, by the impending Assyrian invasion or it could also be a self destruction by her own moral collapse (cf. Amos 5:6, 15).

³¹ Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 198.

48 times in OT and 12 in prophets; for its wider definition, see below), עניים (poor, pious, humble; used 24 times in OT and 7 in prophets), and also רָשׁ (economic/political inferiority; employed 22 times in the OT mainly in the wisdom literature).³² In the Old Testament, the poor and the landless are synonyms and the prophets blamed the rich and powerful for these people's landless situation. Risking their lives, they even confronted the kings on behalf of the weaker sections of the society; for example, Nathan's confrontation with David on behalf of Uriah (2 Sa 12) and Elijah's confrontation with Ahab on Naboth's behalf (1 Ki 21).

The prophets' standing with the weak and the poor is, of course, very much in line with the will of Yahweh (Torah; cf. Ex 22:22-24, 26f.; Dt 10:18f.), the worship of Yahweh (cf. Ps 146:7-9), and the wisdom teaching (cf. Pr 14:31; 22:22f.). But this does not mean that God is partial, which the expression 'God is on the side of the poor' would imply. God is not partial. He does not turn a blind eye to the sins of the poor; "this group in society receives God's special attention because they are on the 'wronged' side of a situation of chronic injustice which God abhors and wishes to have redressed. For God's righteous will to be done requires the execution of justice on their behalf."³³ The wicked poor also would be punished just as the wicked rich would, as can be seen in Isaiah 9:14-17:

So the Lord will cut off from Israel both head and tail, both palm branch and reed in a single day; the elders and prominent men are the head, the prophets who teach lies are the tail. Those who guide this people mislead them, and those who are guided are led astray. Therefore the Lord will take no pleasure in the young men, nor will he pity the fatherless and widows, for everyone is ungodly and wicked, every mouth speaks vileness.

Inasmuch their rights will be protected, the covenant also warns against privileging the poor: "... do not show favoritism to a poor man in his law suit" (Ex 23:3; cf. Dt 1:17).³⁴

Wright observes that, by standing and speaking so vehemently for the poor, the prophets in fact vindicate the impartiality of God:

For in championing the cause of the oppressed in this way, they exonerate God from the suspicion of being actually on the side of the wealthy and powerful, who could point to their wealth and power as apparent evidence of God's blessing on them and their activities. Amos' device of reversing the popular assessment by attaching the judicial verdict 'righteous' (i.e. in the right) to the poor and dispossessed, but applying 'wicked' (i.e. in the wrong) to the wealthy landowners, was a highly effective and emotive way of disassociating God from the claims of the latter group. It reasserted his sovereign independence as the righteous judge who was not fooled by outward appearance.³⁵

³² Cf. H L Bosman, Poverty in the Old Testament: Poverty in Prophetic Literature (University of Stellenbosch Post Graduate OT Seminar Notes, 16 October, 2001) (Hebrew words are mine; he uses transliterations). See also Isa 1:15-31, 23; 5:1-8, 22f.; 10:1-6; 58:3-7; Eze 16:49-52; 18; 22:6-12; Hos 4:1f.; 12:6f.; Am 2:6-8; 6:12; 8:4-6; Zec 7:9-14; Mal 3:5.

³³ Cf. Wright, *Living as the People of God*, 147.

³⁴ For further discussion on the Old Testament's (especially the Book of the Covenant) concern for social justice, especially in dealing with the poor, widows, orphans, and aliens, see H L Bosman, "Such a thing is not done in Israel": The Judicial System of Ancient Israel," in H L Bosman, I G P Gous, and I J J Spangenberg, eds., *Plutocrats and Paupers: Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament* (Pretoria: van Schaik, 1991), 198-199.

³⁵ Wright, *Living as the People of God*, 147.

Righteousness and justice is the favorite theme of the wisdom literature and Psalms: “The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth” (Ps 34:15-16). For the wisdom literature, oppressing the poor is showing contempt for Yahweh, their maker: “He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God” (Pr 14:31; cf. 17:5; Job 31:13-15). The punishment of destruction and cutting off from the land because of the unrighteous of the people is also found in Proverbs: “For the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the unfaithful will be torn from it” (2:21-22).

Psalm 37, claiming the promise of land that had been made to Israel (Ge 17:8; Dt 4:1), explicitly states that, though the promise is there, only the righteous will inherit the promised land: “Evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord..., the meek..., those the Lord blesses..., the righteous..., will inherit the land” (vv.9-29). Psalm 85 is probably a post-exilic Psalm of Israel’s praise and prayer to Yahweh for his forgiveness of their unrighteousness that resulted in their exile. Yahweh’s righteousness is acknowledged and their commitment to its cause is felt clearly: “You showed favor to your land.... You forgave the iniquity of your people.... Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps” (see also Ps 105:8-11).

Although every individual is responsible to pursue righteousness and justice in the land, the Psalms and wisdom literature lay it more on the shoulders of the kings (cf. Dt 17:14-20; we have commented it above, chapter 2). The kings are to practice and administer justice in the land. The Psalmist king (Solomon?) asks God’s power for this: “Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness” (Ps 72:1). The wisdom literature is even more explicit:

Kings detest wrong doing, for a throne is established through righteousness. Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value a man who speaks the truth (Pr 16:12-13). By justice a king gives a country stability, but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down. If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always secure (29:4, 14). It is not for kings, O Lemuel – not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer, lest they drink and forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of the rights. Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy (31:4, 5, 8, 9).

However, kings became the very ones who denied justice to their people. In the wisdom tradition itself, we see how the powerless peasant farmers were exploited by the king and his officials: “If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. The

increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields” (Ecc 5:8-9). Sounds so modern – corruption in the high places!

As Christians, we cannot afford to be indifferent to social injustices facing our contemporary society. Indifference means condoning the practice. Not only are we called to do social services (meeting the immediate need of the poor and the needy), we must also take part in social actions (dealing with the root causes of social injustices).

4.5. LAND SHARING AND LAND CARING

Although the stipulations of the covenant (Decalogue) do not explicitly mention land sharing, the fourth, eight and tenth stipulations (“observe the Sabbath ...” [the land should also observe the Sabbath that will culminate in the Year of Jubilee, see below], “you shall not steal” and “you shall not covet your neighbor’s ... land ...”) would, however, suggest a principle of land sharing operating behind all these things. These texts take for granted that everyone holds a property (land), which will be possible only if there is a life of sharing. When the Decalogue is elaborated or clarified (cf. Dt 1:5) later (cf. Dt 12-26; Ex 21-23), it becomes so clear that the promised land is to be shared “equally” among all the Israelites. Not only must the land be shared, it must also be taken care of. These too are the conditions of the promise of land. Failure to observe them will also result in the invoking of the covenant curses just like the violation of any other conditions discussed above. There are at least four reasons in the Old Testament why land must be shared and two reasons why land needs caring.

4.4.1. Land sharing

4.4.1.1. Argument from Yahweh’s ownership of the land

The reason why the promised land must be shared is simple and obvious – the scripture clearly says that *the land belongs to God* (Lev 25:23) and, as members of God’s family, all Israelites have a right to a share. As the promised land and its people serve as models for the whole earth and the whole humanity, the earth is also to be shared by all humans of the world.

This theology of the divine ownership of the land has been a subject of scholarly debate. For Von Rad, there are two conceptions of the land – historical and cultic – each existing

independently from one another. The historical conception comprises the promise of land to the patriarchs and its fulfilment in the conquest. Von Rad assigns it to the Yahwistic editor J. The cultic conception, on the other hand, believes that Yahweh owns the land. So for von Rad, Yahweh's land (cultic) and the promised land (historical) are two distinct conceptions. Though von Rad believes that Yahweh's ownership of land in Leviticus 25:23 is a cultic concept, he nevertheless rejects the argument that this cultic conception was influenced by the Baal worship of the Canaanites. (The Canaanites believe that the mountain or temple or both are the abode of the Baal. These sacred places represent the whole land, and thus the land [of Canaan] is regarded as the land of the Baal.) He says this so because he believes that the cultic concept of the land in Israel belonged to the earliest Yahwism before the emergence of syncretism in the land.³⁶

Although von Rad's hypothesis is interesting, a closer look in its larger context will show that Leviticus 25:23 is more than just a cultic expression. Wright convincingly counters von Rad's argument by asserting that, for Israel, the cultic aspect cannot stand independently from the historical traditions of the promise of land:

The cult only had meaning within the context of Israel's *relationship* with God, and it is in *that* context that God's ownership of the land has to be set. In the Old Testament we find that "direct relationship between Yahweh and the land of Canaan is specifically stressed as a fulcrum in the relationship between Yahweh and Israel."³⁷ Furthermore, this relationship was grounded in Israel's *historical* traditions, specifically the Exodus-land gift tradition. As regards our understanding of Lev.25:23, it is therefore very significant that this key text for the "cultic" tradition of Yahweh's ownership of the land occurs in a chapter where the 'historical' theme is referred to four times (vv.2, 38, 42, 55).³⁸

Some argue that the concept of the divine ownership of the land is derived from the belief of a territorial deity in Israel's neighbors, as the concept of national and territorial claims of a particular god was quite common among these peoples. This belief further developed into a concept of the "divine right" of the king to own the land, as his title and authority over the land were believed to have been granted by the god who owned the land.³⁹ Wright also counters this argument by observing that Leviticus 25:23 cannot be explained in these terms, for nothing in its context is concerned with either the exclusive recognition of Yahweh as the national deity or the title of a human king. He, then, concludes that Yahweh's ownership of the land in the Old Testament is a theologico-economic concept:

³⁶ G von Rad, "The Promised Land and Yahweh's Land in the Hexateuch," in G von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh/London: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), 79-93.

³⁷ Arthur M Brown, "The Concept of Inheritance in the Old Testament" (diss., Columbia University, 1965), 182 (quoted in Christopher J H Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 60).

³⁸ Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 60 (italics his).

³⁹ For further discussion on the divine ownership of land in the ANE cultures, see literature cited in Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 62; Arthur M Brown, "The Concept of Inheritance in the Old Testament," 83ff.; S Herbert Bess, "Systems of land Tenure in Ancient Israel" (diss., University of Michigan, 1963), 87ff. On royal land ownership outside Israel, see T N D Mettinger, *Solomonic State Officials: A Study of Civil Government Officials of the Israelite Monarchy*, *Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament* 5 (Lund: Gleerup, 1971), 101-9.

Yahweh's ownership of the land is affirmed to ensure the security of *individual families* by preventing permanent alienation from *their land*. It is not simply a grand statement of national belief about the national territory, but the theological sanction of an *internal* economic system of land tenure. The primary feature of this system was the preservation of multiple family holdings in relative equality and freedom. The *theological* force of the belief in divine ownership of the land is thus brought to bear at the *economic* level and focused, in its practical effects, on the *family*.⁴⁰

Yahweh's ownership of the land of Israel, for that matter, the whole earth, can also be argued from the creation theological point of view. As creator, God remains the lord and absolute owner of the earth and all other creatures (Ps 115:16). At a surface reading of Genesis 1:26-27, one may argue that God has given the ownership of the earth to humankind. A careful study of the text will reveal that God's creation of humankind in his own image and giving them the authority to rule over all the earth do not communicate the concept of ownership. The conferred dominion over the earth does give humankind the freedom and legitimacy to hold and manage the land (Ps 8:6; 24:1), but it does not give them the absolute ownership. In the light of Genesis 2:15 (ie, the placement of Adam in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it), Genesis 1:26-27 is, therefore, basically to be taken as a responsibility, responsibility of stewardship and trusteeship over God's other created orders. As God's creation-gift, the earth is collectively given to the whole of humanity to be shared "equally" (for the term, "equally," see below). If the earth is collectively given to the whole of humanity, no individual or group, then, can claim exclusive ownership of the whole or part of it. In fact this belief in God's creation-gift of the planet earth to humankind should be the strongest argument for land sharing.

In Hinduism in India, much to the benefit of the upper caste landowners, the *Dalits* or low caste people were deprived of land for centuries (since more than three thousand years ago) till today by their religion (see appendix 2 for recent *Dalit* movement). Today, there are approximately 250 million *Dalits* without land. The irony is, these people are the ones who do the real farming (for the upper caste landowners) in many places, while they themselves are deprived of owning farms and even do not have a place which they can call home. It is very interesting to see how similar a situation the *dalim* [דלִים] of the Old Testament and the *Dalits* of Hinduism are in. According to Bosman, a *dal* [דל, a singular form of דלִים] is a poor peasant farmer who is politically weak and physically worn out, who receives unfair treatment in legal cases (Isa 10:2), who pays unfair grain taxes to large landowners (Am 5:11), who is abused in debt slavery (Am 8:6), who lacks land for grazing (Isa 14:30), and who is economically and politically marginalized (Zep 3:12).⁴¹ These striking similarities between the landless and impoverished

⁴⁰ Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 63-65. See also S Herbert Bess, "Systems of land Tenure in Ancient Israel" and Arthur M Brown, "The Concept of Inheritance in the Old Testament" for Yahweh's absolute ownership of the land (cited in Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 7).

⁴¹ H L Bosman, Poverty in the Old Testament: Poverty in Prophetic Literature (University of Stellenbosch Post Graduate Old Testament Seminar Notes, 16 October, 2001).

situations of the Old Testament *Dalim* and the *Dalits* of Hinduism are interesting. Could it be that the Hebrew word *dal* is a derivative form of the Sanskrit *dalit*? This will be interesting semantic studies for future research.

In response to an order to leave the place, one of the squatters at the Khyaletscha in Cape Town argued that the land in question does not belong to anyone but God, and as the children of God they (landless) have the right to the land.⁴² This man indeed has explained the whole thesis of mine in a few seconds.

4.5.1.2. Argument from rules of land distribution and land holding

This is closely related to the preceding argument, as the rules of land distribution and land holding are in fact based on Yahweh's ownership of the land. However its distinct rules qualify to study it separately. The primeval history tells us that humans miserably fail to carry out their responsibilities (Ge 3-11). If there is to be a continuity of relationship between God and humanity, a new history must be initiated. Yahweh, to whom all the earth ultimately belongs, gives the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendent Israelites so that the promised land and its people may serve as a standard measure to the whole of humanity. One of the examples Israel must show to the world is the sharing of the land. The promised land is to be divided "equally"⁴³ by lot among all the Israelites according to their tribes (שבט or מטה) and sub-tribes (משפחה)⁴⁴ (cf. Jos 13-21; Nu 26:55; 33:54; Eze 45:1). For the agrarian society like the ancient Israel, it also still applies to many of today's societies, that "ownership or non-ownership of land forms the basis of

⁴² Cf. E TV News Live at Seven (July 2001).

⁴³ This does not strictly mean a quantitative equality, but a relative equality. Geographical differences, sizes of families, and numbers of families within a משפחה will definitely result in some having greater potential for prosperity. This is rather a principle that "every family should have *enough* to be economically viable and self-sufficient" (cf. Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 177, italics his).

⁴⁴ There have been arguments on the English translation of the word משפחה. A common rendering is 'family' or 'clan.' But משפחה is larger than family or clan. Wright asserts that it is a grouping of several family units into a largely self-sufficient and self-protective organism, so he argues for a "kin group" (Christopher J H Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 48-49). But there is a little problem in using this term, since one's kin (or brother, e.g., Dt 17:15), on the one hand, can cover all fellow tribesmen or fellow Israelites, and, on the other, it limits itself within close relatives (Ruth 2:20; 3:2, etc). Gottwald describes משפחה as a "protective association of extended families" (Norman K Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250 – 1050 B.C.E* [Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979], 301-5). This too does not communicate the function of משפחה adequately, as it is much larger, stronger and binding than a mere external association. Since משפחה also has a territorial area and authority (Nu 26:30-33; Jos 17:2-3; 1 Ch 7:14-19; see also Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 51-53), the word "sub-tribe" would best communicate its concept and function. Its structure well fits between the tribe (שבט or מטה) and family (בית אב, literally, "father's house"). How did these sub-tribes come into being within a tribe? It would appear that משפחה came to exist naturally out of the influence the prominent members of the tribe commanded over their descendants and others living in their areas. The system is also found in many tribal societies today. For consistency, I will use its original Hebrew word משפחה in this thesis.

wealth and poverty”⁴⁵ To prosper (be blessed), therefore, is to be landed. And this blessing is not for the privileged few only, but for all the Israelites.

Notice the division of the land according to *מטה* and *משפחה* come first, and the division among *אב בת* (families) is to be done within the *משפחה*. Scholars have long debated whether the individual Israelite families had the right of land ownership or not. Some observe that, like many other primitive nomadic tribes, the land of Israel was held in a collective community ownership within the *משפחה* and periodically redistributed to members of the *משפחה* for cultivation and pasture (Cf. Ps 16:5-6 and Mic 2:5).⁴⁶ Others argue that the inheritance rules such as the inalienability of the family lands (Lev 24:23-28; cf. 1 Ki 21), prohibition of the removal of landmarks (Dt 19:14; 27:17; Hos 5:10; Pr 23:10-11; Job 24:2-4), and the prohibition of theft and coveting others’ properties (Ex 20:15-17; Zec 5:3-4; Hos 4:2; 7:1; Isa 1:23; Jer 7:9-10; Ps 50:16-18) would suggest the practice and existence of individual land ownership. However, the evidences of the redivision of some lands in Psalms 16:5-6 and Micah 2:5 pose a little problem for advocates of the latter. They nevertheless argue that all the land allocated to a tribe or *משפחה* was probably not divided into inalienable family patrimonies. Some portions might have been left for common purposes and redivided accordingly from time to time.⁴⁷ A closer reading of the texts in question, however, would support the position of collective land holding. The term land “holding”⁴⁸ is preferred because, as we have discussed above, the ultimate ownership of the land resides with Yahweh alone. The fact that family lands are inalienable or cannot be sold permanently (for example, Naboth’s inalienable vineyard, 1 Ki 21:3) and their land marks may not be removed are indeed strong indications that individual families do not really own their lands, but they just hold their share within their *משפחה* landholdings. Had they owned, then they would surely have the right of sale (alienation).

⁴⁵ Cf. Itumeleng Mosala, “Ownership or Non-ownership of Land Forms the Basis of Wealth and Poverty: A Black Theological Perspective” in H L Bosman, I G P Gous, and I J J Spangenberg, eds., *Plutocrats and Paupers: Wealth and poverty in the Old Testament*, 20. For Mosala’s views on the oppression the imperial wealthy landowners exercise and the poor peasants’ necessary struggle for their economic liberation, see pp. 20-24.

⁴⁶ For example, see literature cited in Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land*, 66-68; K H Henry, “Land Tenure in the Old Testament,” *PEQ* 86 (1954), 9; M Lurje, *Studien zur Geschichte der wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Verhältnisse im israelitisch-judäischen Reiche*. BZAW 45 (1927), 5-6; M J Laure, *The Property Concept of the Early Hebrews*. *Bulletin of the State University of Iowa. Studies in Sociology, Economics, Politics and History* 4/2 [N.S. 91] (1915), 89; Henry Schaeffer, *The Social Legislation of the Primitive Semites* (New Haven: Yale University Press and London: Oxford University Press, 1915), 228ff; *Hebrew Tribal Economy and the Jubilee as Illustrated in Semitic and Indo-European Village Communities* (Leipzig: J C Hinrichs, 1922), 1; Chester C McCown, *The Genesis of Social Gospel* (New York and London: Alfred A Nopf, 1929), 119.

⁴⁷ For example, Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land*, 68-70.

⁴⁸ See also, Levine, *Leviticus*, 168-175, 270-274. Levine translates *אחזה* as “tenured land or land holding” instead of the common translation of “possession.”

But this collective holding of land is not exactly the same as that of the communist system of the state ownership of the land. In all practical senses, individual holders are the “masters” or “owners” of their lands; even the king cannot take away their family lands (cf. 1 Ki 21). The only difference of this land holding from the real land ownership system is that in the former the family land cannot be alienated which is not the case with the latter. Nevertheless, Christians have a lesson or two to learn from communists. As I shared with him about my faith in Jesus Christ, a man from China who was doing his post-doctoral research at the University of Stellenbosch asked: “In (communist) China, everyone has a place to live. Why is it that in Christian South Africa, many people do not have a place to live?” His statement that everyone has a place to live in China might not be the whole truth, but it definitely challenges me that, as Christians, we (all Christians of the world) could have been more concerned about the landless poor, which includes sharing of resources, including land. Capitalism pursues freedom at the cost of equality and communism pursues equality at the cost of freedom (including the freedom of individual land holding).⁴⁹

Being one among the brothers (Dt 17:15), the “equal” distribution of land also applies to the kings and nobles of Israel. The kings are in fact the ones to see to it that land is “equally” shared among the Israelites (Dt 17:18-20). However, even though they knew very well about the tenth stipulation (“you shall not covet your neighbor’s ... land ...”), from Saul’s grasping and giving away lands (1 Sa 21:7) and his craving for the throne for these greedy and selfish motives (1 Sa 20:30-31) to Ahab-Jezebel’s unlawful and forceful take-over of Naboth’s inalienable family vineyard (1 Ki 21; 2 Ki 9:21-37),⁵⁰ the kings became the very first to violate the law of land sharing. The rich and powerful followed suit. Landless poor began to appear in Israel. No surprise, then, that the prophets thundered:

Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land (Isa 5:8).

Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning’s light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it. They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellow-man of his inheritance (Mic 2:1-2).

This is what the Lord says: “For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed (Am 2:6-7b).

⁴⁹ Cf. David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 441, who cites Leslie Newbigin, *Foolishness of the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 8, 118.

⁵⁰ The text tells us that when Naboth refused to sell his נַחֲלָה vineyard to him, King Ahab became sullen and angry, and “lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat” (v 4). The king of a nation sulking and refusing to eat just because he could not get a small vineyard is rather strange. This is indeed a testimony of how greed can really make one suffer, and how greedy the Israelite king and his people had become.

As a result, Israel grasped her way into exile. Would the new covenant community of Jeremiah 31:31-34 fare better in obeying the commandment of the sharing of land? Judging from experiences, the world seems to be getting worse and worse in this area. As March observes: “Humans seem to be especially vulnerable to sin when it comes to land, probably because they recognize how very important land is.”⁵¹ From the grasping of land by the Old Testament kings and nobles to today’s massive land acquisition by the rich and powerful, land remains a common denominator for most injustices committed. Many so-called Christians are no exceptions in greed when it comes to land. Christians of both the west and the rest today are cornered uncomfortably again and again whenever mention is made of acts of the colonial past of the “Christian” Europe, including the forceful take over of others’ lands, in many cases, by “inhuman” means. Mission societies even had their own share of land related sins. For example, some Protestant Missions in North America were said to have regarded the subduing of the “Pagan” Native Americans and taking over of their lands as a divine duty similar to the Israelites conquest of Canaan.⁵² One wonders over and again; how could Christians do such a thing? Or, as Kritzing, Meiring, and Saayman ask, did this happen because Europe was never really Christian?⁵³ It is no surprise, then, that the Native Americans are said to have responded to their compatriot White missionaries, “Before you give us the gospel, give us back our *lands* first.” With a fresh start, past hurts are usually forgiven, if not forgotten. But when it comes to land, people find it difficult to forgive or forget.

“When the White men first came here, they had the Bible and we had the land. And they said, ‘let us pray.’ When we opened our eyes, behold, they had the land and we had the Bible.” This Southern African joke laments the loss of their lands to the European “Christian” settlers and at the same time it also implies that Africans are now more “Christian” than the White men.⁵⁴ Look at the current infamous land squatting episodes in Zimbabwe – veterans forcefully taking back the European owned farms, a reverse “land sin,” if you will. Despite the Supreme Court’s ruling of it as unconstitutional and national and international condemnation, the Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe will be remembered in some quarters as a “kinsman-redeemer” who has restored

⁵¹ W E March, *Israel and the Politics of Land: A Theological Case Study* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster /John Knox, 1994), 94.

⁵² Cf., Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 275; Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 103.

⁵³ J J Kritzing, P G Meiring, and W A Saayman, *On Being Witness* (Halfway House: Orion, 1994), 110.

⁵⁴ Biang H Kato, late Nigerian theologian, makes the same joke slightly different: “The Missionaries came to our country and taught us to pray, but while our eyes were closed they stole our lands” (quoted in Waldron Scott, *Bring Forth Justice* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1980], 23) “This comment,” says Scott, “may not have originated with Kato, and he (a good friend of missionaries) would not have meant for it to be taken literally. Yet he and many other Africans today insist that Western missions acknowledge their complicity with the old colonial system and recognize the damage it has done to Africa.”

their family properties to them.⁵⁵ One can only pray and hope that, not the Zimbabwean style, but amicable land reform, will happen in South Africa, which also has a background of the Whites comprising only the 20% of the population owning 87% of the land while 80% black population owns only 13% of the land.⁵⁶ West Africans are said to have jokingly thanked heat and mosquitoes for “driving away” the White men. Not only did Christians kill “Pagans” and “Heathens” to possess their lands, in many cases they also killed each other over lands. For example, for Africans, the Anglo-Boer war in Southern Africa over the “land of diamond” was but Christians killing fellow Christians whom they thought would love one another.

Sad to say, “Ahab-Jezebels” are on the increase today much to the anxiety and suffering of the “Naboths.” The past acts of land grabbing by the rich and powerful, including those of the colonial powers and settlers, may be forgiven, considering it as a product of their own “primitive” and “uncivilized” ages. But what about today’s “civilized” rich and powerful owning hectares and hectares of land while other fellow human beings do not have a place to lay their heads? We have also seen how unrestrained and insensitive land acquisitions, use and exploitation of it by the privileged few, including companies, corporations, and government undertakings are uprooting many a family and threatening the very order of life and nature in different parts of the world. We are grasping our way into exile.

4.5.1.3. Argument from the rules of land redemption and the Year of Jubilee

Land redemption and the Year of Jubilee were regulated in Israel (Lev 25:23-28) to prevent (land) capitalism and to ensure that the principle of land sharing remained the norm. In so doing the regulations protect and support the family land holding, counter the tendency for land to accumulate in the hands of a few, and release the economic pressures on the poor.⁵⁷

The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants. Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land. If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold. If, however, a man has no-one to redeem it for him but he himself prospers and acquires sufficient means to redeem it, he is to determine the value for the years since he sold it and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it; he can then go back to his own property. But if he

⁵⁵ The root cause of the land squatting in Zimbabwe is the fact that approx. 4500 farmers, almost all of them Europeans, own 11 million hectares of best agricultural lands and 6 million native Zimbabweans farm on 16 million hectares, less fertile lands and much of it overfarmed and overcrowded. Some European farmers are the descendants of the settlers who seized the land from its original inhabitants; others bought their lands before and after independence in 1980. President Mugabe and his supporters advocate confiscation of European owned farms without compensation, saying that, if they must be compensated, Britain should compensate them for it was Britain who created this problem in the first place. Most of the Zimbabweans agree that a program of orderly land reform is needed, but not the way it is currently done (cf. *Time*, May 1, 2000, 33-37).

⁵⁶ This percentage analysis is according to John W De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Cape Town: D Phillip, 1979), 78.

⁵⁷ Cf. Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 174-180.

does not acquire the means to repay him, what he sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and he can then go back to his property.

It is very clear from v.23 that the land cannot be sold “permanently.”⁵⁸ However, there is a provision for an impoverished Israelite to sell his land temporarily to help meet his dire needs. At any rate, the family property must be recovered. Three ways of recovery are provided: the redemption of the land by the nearest kinsman (relative) גאל קרב (v.25), buying back of it by the seller himself if he later has the means (vv.26-27); and the eventual return of the land to the seller in the Year of Jubilee if he has no one to redeem the land and he does not have the means to buy it back by himself (v.28). Scholars are divided as to whether the nearest kinsman restores the land he bought to the impoverished brother or keeps it for himself. Some argue, which they think is in consistency with the very concept of redemption, that the redeemed property is returned to the original owner.⁵⁹ Others believe that it is retained by the גאל קרב till the brother-seller has the means to buy it back or till the Year of Jubilee if the seller could not buy back before that.⁶⁰ Wright advocates the latter view by arguing that, based on Leviticus 25:25, 35, 39, 47 which all begin with or contain the phrase “if one of your countrymen becomes poor,” the redemption and Jubilee were originally two unconnected regulations; and the “three stages of redemption”⁶¹ would suggest that the “redeemer” indeed keeps the redeemed property. Wright’s arguments have some weight. However, a plain reading of the text would suggest that “the countryman who becomes poor” in vv.25, 35, 39, 47 might not necessarily be the same person who went through Wright’s three stages of impoverishment. The text could well speak about three or four different poor brothers in different conditions of poverty. Consistency should have

⁵⁸ Levine, *Leviticus*, 174, translates the Hebrew word לצמחת “beyond reclaim.” He explains that it comes from the Akkadian word *tsamit* (or *tsamat*) meaning “finally handed over.” The sale contract is often recorded *tsamit adi dāriti* (finally handed over to all generations). It means that the sale recorded is final and the property sold is irretrievable. A house in a walled city may end up in this way if it is not redeemed within a year (cf. v.30, which reads לצמחת לקנה אתו לדרתו, literally, “finally handed over to the one who purchases it, to his generations”). But the sales of אוחה are not of that status, they are not לצמחת.

⁵⁹ For example, Levine, *Leviticus*, 175; Martin Noth, *Leviticus*, OTL (1965), 189; Donald A Leggett, *Levirate and Goel Institutions in the Old Testament* (Cherry Hill, N J: Mack, 1974), 95 (as assessed in Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land*, 120).

⁶⁰ For example Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* 1 (London: Oxford, 1926), 84; William McKane, “Ruth and Boaz,” *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society* 19 (1961-1962), 35; David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: University of London Press, 1956), 272-73 (as assessed in Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land*, 120).

⁶¹ First stage: The impoverished Israelite offers a portion of his land for sale, and this is redeemed or pre-empted by the “redeemer.” Second stage: If a person’s economic condition is not still improved, presumably even after several such sales (v.35), it is then the kinsman’s duty to maintain him as a dependent laborer and with interest free loans (vv.36ff.). The third stage is a last resort (v.39). Having no land left to sell or use as security for loans, the person is reduced to selling himself and his family entirely into the service of his kinsman, in which case he is not to be treated like a slave, but again as a dependent laborer. The second and third stages of redemption indicate that the redeemed or pre-empted property remains with the “redeemer” till the brother in difficulties has the means to buy back or till the Year of Jubilee comes if he could not buy back before that (cf. Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land*, 119-128).

the day; it is more probable that the “redeemer”⁶² does not possess (retain) the redeemed property. He redeems it for his impoverished brother; if he retains it for himself, then he is not a kinsman-redeemer.

Whether an Israelite’s land has been sold to an outsider having no one to redeem it or it has been redeemed or pre-empted by the kinsman “redeemer” (and even if the redeemer retains), at the Jubilee, it must be restored to the original holder. In sum, the redemption regulations and stages are designed to protect the principle of land sharing as well as to keep the land within the משפחה and Jubilee is specifically intended to protect the principle of land sharing among the Israelites families (בֵּית אָב) by restoring lands to the original holders. The debt release text of Deuteronomy 15:1-3 surely includes the release of mortgaged land to protect the original family land holding.

Not only the land, but its produce also is to be shared. Although every family holds land, for reasons unpredictable (untimely rain, pest, sickness, infertility, etc), there would be seasons when some families experience poor harvest. There are also widows, orphans, and aliens. Therefore, those with good harvests must share with these people who are in need (Ex 23:10-11; Lev 19:9-10; 23:22; 25:3-55; Dt 14:28-29; 24:19-21).⁶³ The practice of keeping the land fallow at every seventh year (Ex 23:10-11; cf. the sabbatical year for the land in Lev 25:1-7) has a tripartite purpose: (1) a humanitarian purpose (to share its produce with the poor who may get food from what grows in the field); (2) a religious purpose (fulfilling an obligation to Yahweh – making the Sabbath rest holy by faithfully observing it); and (3) agricultural scientific reason (restoration of the land by giving it rest) (we will come back to this later). In fact these three purposes overlap with one another. So the transgression of the laws of the sabbatical and Jubilee years of the land means failure to return the land to its original holder. It also means no sharing of its produce with the poor, failure to fulfill an obligation of the Sabbath rest to Yahweh, and the overuse of the land (cf. Ex 31:14; Nu 15:30-36; Dt 5:12-15). For the priestly view, the transgression of the laws of the sabbatical and Jubilee years are the primary reason for Israel’s exile. In order to dwell in the land they must observe these laws; failure to observe them will

⁶² The redeemer’s redemption could be either a redemption proper (buying back the property already sold to a third party, eg, Ruth chapter 4) or a pre-emption (buying property from a kinsman before it is put on the open market, Jeremiah chapter 32). In both cases, the main thing is to make sure the property stays within the משפחה.

⁶³ Some of these passages talk about allowing the poor to glean as a concern for and help to them during the harvest times. But one wonders, if helping the poor is the real motive for the gleaning practice, why do not the owners of the field let them work with the harvesters and give them a reasonable measure of grain at the end of the day? This is what the Mara people (this author’s people) practice. The poor are usually invited to the harvest or they approach the owners of the field if invitations are not forthcoming. One should not and cannot reject the request when the poor approach one.

cause them to be cast out, leaving the land to lie fallow so as to compensate for those years in which the laws of the Sabbatical years had not been observed.⁶⁴

I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it (Lev 26:33-35; cf. 2 Ch 36:21).

4.5.1.4. Argument from the fact of universal brotherhood

The main reason why humans must share the earth (land) and use it according to God's will is simply because we are family, the family of humanity, the family of God, and the earth is our collective inheritance. When we carefully examine Israel's covenantal relationship with God, though it does use a kingship terminology (Yahweh as the Divine Sovereign of Israel) and legal contractual terms, as discussed in chapter 3, there is also a familial relationship between Yahweh and his people Israel. Yahweh is the father of Israel, and for that matter, the father of the whole humanity. Because we are God's children, we have (if we haven't, then we must have) a family tie to one another, which further results in creating a sense of responsibility to each other as fellow children of God. Because the earth is our inheritance that God collectively gives to all humankind, we have (if we haven't, then we must have) a sense of "ownership" of the earth. This sense of "ownership" further motivates us, not to destroy, but to take care of our earth well.

Furthermore, a tripartite relationship between God, Israel (the family of God), and the land is to serve as a standard measure for the whole of humanity's relationship with God, the land, and with one another. Being descendants of the same father and mother (Adam and Eve, cf. Ge 4, 5, 10, 11), we humans all belong to one global family. Differences are there to stay – differences in race, creed, color, status, etc. But as family, we must recognize and accept our differences in love. This family awareness should cause us to be sensitive to the needs and conditions of other family members (fellow human beings) and so fulfill our family obligations of sharing. As the world, whether we like it or not, is moving towards a global village resulting in different ethnic and religious groups working and living together, the need of peaceful coexistence and sharing of resources including land is greater than ever before. Therefore, no matter if it is in "our land," "your land," or "their land," we must share the land and its resources remembering that we are all but alien tenants of Yahweh's land. Wright rightly writes:

That all people should have access to some of the resources of the earth that is God's gift is a basic human right which takes priority over the unchecked accumulation of private ownership. Israel, as God's redeemed, "model" community, were given an institution designed to protect this principle in their own stewardship of their land. So we may justifiably take it as a moral paradigm and apply its force as a "lever" in Christian-based arguments for land reform. We may well need other means and methods in other given economic situations, but the

⁶⁴ Cf. Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 193.

principle seems clear, that ownership (*holding*) of the land should be as widely and equitably spread as possible.⁶⁵

4.5.2. Land caring

Not only the sharing of land and its produce, the taking care of it is also the integral part of the conditions of the land. Although anyone with a common sense will naturally understand the urgency and importance of land caring, the need to take concrete actions is becoming more and more urgent due to the overuse and exploitation of the land, which is alarmingly destroying God's created order of nature. The Old Testament explicitly gives two reasons why we must take care of our planet earth.

4.5.2.1. Argument from creation-gift obligations

Adam was put in the Garden of Eden, for that matter, in the "garden-earth," to use March's⁶⁶ term, to be the garden-earth-keeper, that is, to work it and to take care of it (Ge 2:15). As a model, Israel's relationship to the land serves as a "testimony to God's intention and God's unwillingness to let human negligence or rebellion be the last word... the tending of creation, the caring, loving tilling of garden-earth, is intended as the work of all humankind."⁶⁷ Working (using) the earth and taking care of it should, therefore, be balanced. Sad to say, the caring part is getting more and more neglected today. Even in the midst of the war the Israelites were to follow laws concerning the treatment of trees near the besieged cities. Fruit trees are to be preserved (cf. Dt 20:19-20).

We have seen the increasing desertification and barrenness of rain forests due to massive logging. We have also seen how many fields are becoming infertile due to the over farming including the overuse of chemical fertilizers to produce good harvest to generate capital profits. We cannot drink water from lakes, rivers, streams, and rain anymore without first expensively purifying it. We have also experienced increasing global warming because of industrial toxic emissions that are affecting the very nature of the seasons. Untimely rains or too much rain in the rainy season, too cold in winter, and too hot in summer; all seem to be the effect of industrial pollution. The earth is groaning.

⁶⁵ Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 177 (italics in parenthesis added).

⁶⁶ W E March, *Israel and the Politics of Land*, 89.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

If the unchecked exploitation of mother earth continues like this, it will soon become an uninhabitable desert and a barren land for future generations. As argued above, our universal brotherhood includes the future generation to whom we have an obligation to give them the best earth we can. It's a high time to wake up and care for our earth lest we pollute our way into exile by making the land barren.

4.5.2.2. Argument from rules of fallow years

It has been found that the concept and practice of a sabbatical cycle of years was pre-Israelite.⁶⁸ As discussed above, observance of the sabbatical year will give the land the rest it needs. As we have discussed in our textual analysis, the word מנוח (rest) is derived from its verbal root נוח (give rest), the ultimate purpose of which is to regain strength. This implies that land should not be overly used and exploited. By regulating a fallow year or sabbatical year, the overuse of the land is protected and its fertility restored.⁶⁹ On the question of whether the fallow year was a fixed year over the whole land or something to be observed individually by farmers on their own land, its humanitarian purpose and the fact that farms would have different years of farming history clearly suggest that it is the latter.

5.6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have discussed the four conditions of the promise of land – the exclusive worship of Yahweh, the pursuance of holiness, the practice of righteousness and justice, and sharing of and caring for the land. Failure to observe these conditions will result in losing the land. It should be noted also that these conditions are not a unilateral imposition on Israel by Yahweh, but a covenantal bilateral agreement between Yahweh and Israel, which has consequences if violated. And the Old Testament reports how the Israelites failed time and again to observe the stipulations of the land covenant. Did Yahweh demand too much of Israel? Was Israel's repeated violation of the commandments due to the practical impossibility of the theological-ethical standards required of her?

⁶⁸ Cf. Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 143; Cyrus H Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici 98 (1949), 5, 57-62. Gordon observes the existence of the seven-year cycles of nature, including a fallow year, of which the purpose was to ensure agricultural prosperity in the ensuing seven-year period. The effects of the victory of Baal over Mot was not seasonal or annual, but lasted for seven years (cited in Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 143)

⁶⁹ See also, Noth, *Leviticus*, 183ff.

Experiences have proved that the Decalogue remains the desired rule for a society or nation, as can be seen from the fact that the laws of almost all the countries of the world are based on it. The promised land and its people are to serve as a model for other lands and nations in living a (godly) life that Yahweh desires and sets for his people (all humankind) on this planet earth. Although the servant in Isaiah 49:6 may refer to the Messiah, it can typologically be applied also to Israel collectively: "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." As such, the demand was not too high, neither were the commandments impractical or impossible. The opposite would be chaos. It should be noted again that, forgiveness was available for failures and violations of the covenant stipulations. Had they heeded the prophetic warnings and repented, the Israelites would not have been exiled.

If the people exclusively worship Yahweh alone, then they will live a holy life in the promised land. If they live a holy life, then they will practice righteousness and justice. If they practice righteous and justice, then they will be sensitive to the divine obligation of land sharing and caring. Therefore, all these four conditions are interrelated. Violate one of them, and all are violated. Having concluded that the promise of land to the Israelites is conditional and having discussed the four conditions, one wonders what then is the chief end or purpose of the promise of land and observing all its conditions? It is to this the purpose of the promise of land that we now turn.

Chapter 5

THE PURPOSE OF THE PROMISE OF LAND

5.1. INTRODUCTION

From a theological approach, the whole Protestant Bible can be divided into three major sections. The first section, the first eleven chapters of Genesis, is God's dealing with the entire human race or a primeval history. In the second section, from Genesis 12 through end of Malachi, God particularly deals with the promised land and its people Israel; and the third section, the New Testament, is, of course, God's dealing with Jesus Christ and his followers. As indicated in the previous chapters, the second section revolves around the promise of land – its nature, conditions, and purpose – to Abraham and his descendants. On the one hand, the promise of land gave Israel rest and wellbeing; on the other, because of the very promise Israel suffered, when the conditions of the promise were violated and its purpose neglected and forgotten. For other lands it was their military deficiency that caused their defeat, but for Israel it was their violation of the conditions and failure to live up the purpose of the promise of land that caused them to lose their land. In the previous chapter we have discussed the conditions, so in this chapter we will discuss the purpose of the promise of land. As mentioned earlier, these two – conditions and purpose – are closely related. In short, the promise of land is the promise of blessing.

A diachronic approach to the study of the promise of land will attempt to understand questions such as when were the land promise texts written, who were the authors/redactors and what historical background influenced or motivated them to write such land promise texts in such particular period of time? Within the diachronic school, some, as discussed in chapter 2, assert that the land promise theme is the creation of the late period, probably an exilic reconstruction of Israel's theology, when Israel felt that its possession of the land was in jeopardy. The promise theme was constructed with a purpose to bolster Israel's "claims to the land by recourse to a supposedly ancient divine promise to Abraham."¹ For others the promise was given to Abraham before he entered Canaan. Although this view makes the promise very ancient, for scholars of this school, the god who promised a land to Abraham did not have to be necessarily Yahweh. It well could be the god of a nomadic clan who promised to his devotees the two great needs of

¹ See W D Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 17. Davies refers to R E Clements, *Abraham and David: Genesis XV and its Meaning for Israelite Tradition*. Studies in Biblical Theology, 2nd series, 5 (London: SCM, 1967), 23, who refers to H Gunkel, "Abraham," RGG, 2nd ed., 1, col.66; J Hoftijzer, *Die Verheissungen an die drei Erzväter* (Leiden: Brill, 1956), 52ff.

nomads – a land and posterity. Later when the descendents of Abraham's clan were incorporated into Israel, their god, the god of Abraham, later known as the God of the Fathers, was identified with Yahweh who had brought Israel out of Egypt.²

There is another hypothesis that Abraham had already entered Canaan when the promise came. Advocates of this view argue that the god who gave the promise was not the god of the nomadic group because this god did not have his own land to give. The god of the promise was the god of a settled community who owned the land. He is identified as the El deity, whose name is probably *El Shaddai*, of Mamre at Hebron (cf. Ge 15:19) where Abraham dwelt and where the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, and Kadmonites, etc, were. According to this view, the patriarchs were not merely nomads but leaders of settlements in the agrarian society of Canaan.³

Although it will be stimulating to do further research on the historical origins of the promise of land, we will leave it here for future research, and henceforth our study of the theme will be based on the texts in their final forms. Special attention will be given to theological-ethical teachings of the texts. This approach is preferred because to understand our proper task of finding the purpose of the promise of land, “what is important is not the rediscovery of the origins of the promise to Abraham, but the recognition that that promise was so reinterpreted from age to age that it became a living power in the life of the people of Israel. Not the mode of its origin matters, but its operation as a formative, dynamic, seminal force in the history of Israel.”⁴

The second of section of the Bible begins with the promise of land and its purpose. The texts give a twofold purpose – for blessing and for praising (worshipping) Yahweh.

5.2. THE PROMISE OF LAND IS FOR BLESSING:

A textual study of Genesis 12:1-3; Ex 3:8; 4:23; 5:1

The Lord had said to Abram,⁵ “Leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land [אֶרֶץ] I will show you. I will make you a great nation and I will bless you. I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you (Ge 12:1-3).

² For example, A Alt, “The God of the Fathers,” *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), 48, 65f. For further discussion, see Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 18, and the literature cited there.

³ For example, see Clements, *Abraham and David*, who forcefully presents this view (as assessed in Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 18).

⁴ Cf. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 18. For further discussion on the approach, see *ibid*, 18-24. Although Davies' work, as his title would suggest, deals more with the NT concept of land, he undertakes extensive research of land in the OT (well over 150 pages).

⁵ For consistency, in this thesis, I will use the name Abraham for both Abram and Abraham texts unless the context clearly demands either one. For change of his name from Abram to Abraham, see Ge 17:1-8.

This passage is commonly titled the call of Abraham. Equally, or even more, it may be appropriately called the promise of land to Abraham, as henceforth, the promise of land serves as a determining factor for the history and destiny of Abraham's descendents (Israelites). In other words, the history of Israel is the history of the promise of land. Weinfeld forcefully affirms this:

No other people in the history of mankind was as preoccupied as the people of Israel with the land in which they lived. The whole biblical historiography revolves around the land. The pivot of the patriarchal stories is the promise of the land for the Patriarchs and their descendants. The stories of the Exodus and the wandering in the desert are a kind of preparation for the entrance into the Land; the stories of the conquest describe the struggle with the Canaanites over the Land; and the whole survey of the periods of the judges and the monarchy is concerned with the gradual loss of the Land.⁶

Even if we call Genesis 12:1-3 the call of Abraham, it is a call to the promised land so that Abraham may be blessed there. Yahweh promises a twofold blessing – blessing for Abraham himself and for others.

5.2.1. For Personal Blessing: to be landed, prosper, become a great nation and worshipper of Yahweh

Go to the land I will show you. The land that Yahweh will show Abraham is later identified as Canaan (v.5). In order to receive blessings, Abraham has but to go to the promised land. And verse 4 tells us that Abraham went. This (Abraham's) obedience to God and faith in him became one of the greatest living examples for obedient and faithful life for both the Old and New Testament communities (Heb 11:8).

I will bless you. The Hebrew word for blessing, בֵּרַכָּה, mentioned five times in this short passage, connotes both material and spiritual well being. The promised land will give Abraham both of these blessings. Landedness means wellbeing for an agrarian society. Abraham, who is not materially blessed in Haran, will be landed and as a result he will prosper.

Background information on the social-economic situation of Abraham before he was promised a land will help us understand the desirability of blessings in the promised land. The reason for Terah's family leaving Ur, a great city-state in lower Mesopotamia situated at modern Tell el-Migayyar near the northern part of the ancient coastline of the Persian Gulf in southern Iraq, is not given. But it could possibly be due to the increasingly harsh economic conditions, along with its overpopulation, during the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2100-1000 BC). Again, the text does not

⁶ Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 183.

provide any reason for Terah's detour to Haran. It could well be for the same economic reason as Haran, situated some 550 miles northwest of Ur, about 10 miles north of the present-day Syrian-Turkish border on the left bank of the Balikh River, was a focus of the international donkey caravan trade. In the eighteenth century BC, it was a center of seminomadic Amorite tribes. It is against this economic background that we will understand the attractiveness of the promise of land.⁷

Blessing also entails rest – rest because of material wellbeing and rest because of spiritual wellbeing (praising Yahweh). In fact the promise of land is for rest. If the promise is a means, rest is an end. The essence of this rest is, as von Rad puts, a “tangible peace granted to a nation plagued by enemies and weary of wandering.”⁸ Janzen asserts that God grants rest to his people in Canaan in stages - beginning with the conquest (Jos 1:13, 15; 11:44; 22:4; 23:1), it culminates in the era of David and Solomon (2 Sa 7:1, 11; 1 Ki 5:4; 8:56).⁹

I will make your name great. Through the promise of land, Abraham, who does not seek for a name, is promised here the same that was denied to the Babelites (Ge 11:1-9) a few generations ago. What a reminder for our name starved generation, that pride comes before fall and humility comes before glory (cf. 1 Sa 2:30; Ps 18:25-17; 40:4; Pr 3:34; Mt 23:12; Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5). Was Abraham a humble and selfless man? His willingness to go to the unknown land and his attitude towards Lot, his nephew (Ge 12:4; 13:8-9) would suggest a positive answer.

Name is associated with a familiar sight and sound. Because he will leave his name and identity for the new land where his name will not be known, the promised land will give Abraham a new name (identity) and make it great. He will no longer be Abram of Haran, but Abraham of Canaan, the promised land. This illustrates a spatial-ethnological awareness that the promise of land will inevitably entail. Name is identity, and a great name is therefore an identity that cannot be mistaken and forged. The promised land will provide Abraham, for that matter, Israel, with an unmistakable identity.¹⁰

The Israelites' experience of exile clearly demonstrated how the promise of land gave to them this spatial-ethnological awareness. Although many of them probably lived in their own houses

⁷ For further discussion on Ur of the Chaldeans and Haran, see, M Sarna, *Genesis*, 87-88.

⁸ G von Rad, *The Problem of Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 155. For further discussion on מְנוּחָה, אֲחוּזָה, and מְחֻלָּה, see W Janzen, “Land,” 144-145; Brueggemann, *The Land*, 93-94.

⁹ W Janzen, “The Land,” 145.

¹⁰ Using one's city or land as one's identity is quite common in the ANE. For example, expressions such as Ruth the Moabite (Ruth, *passim*), Jephthah the Gileadite (Jdg 11:1), and Elijah the Tishbite (1 Ki 17:1).

and planted and ate their own produce in Babylon (Jer 29:5-7),¹¹ life outside the promised land was not complete. For them, home was not a house; home was the land where they had their roots. No matter how long they had lived in Babylon, they could never become Babylonians, as it is strongly depicted in their nostalgic song of Psalm 137.

The same is true of many ethnic groups of today. For example, Mbiti asserts that, for Africans, the land provides them with the roots of existence; to remove them by force from their land, therefore, he warns, is an act of such great injustice that no foreigner can fathom.¹² Exactly as Mbiti warns, a Sudanese church leader, who was forced out of his village in the Southern Sudan by the ongoing civil war, lamented: “If you are not in your land, that means you do not exist.”¹³

For some ethnic groups, it is the forceful division of their lands that drastically affected their names and social fabric. For example, the colonial masters, without any respect or sensitivity to one’s ethnicity, had separated birds of the same feather that fly together, and forced birds of different feathers to fly together against the creator’s design. This they did to serve their own economic, communicative, and administrative purposes. When colonial countries regained their sovereignty from their colonial powers, their international boundaries naturally followed those artificially constructed colonial boundaries. These alien-drawn boundaries, done at the colonial masters’ offices hundreds or thousands of miles away, had divided lands that should not have been divided, and put together lands (nations) that should not have been put together. This makes families “foreigners” causing tremendous amounts of human misery. These boundaries simply are not practical and do not work at best, nor are they accepted by the affected peoples.

I will make you a great nation. To be a great nation involves greatness in territory, number, power, and significance. Here again, Abraham, just one person, will become a great nation that was denied to the Babelites who had become proud of their greatness in number. Because he will leave his native land and his people for the promised land; the Lord will give Abraham a great

¹¹ The Persian (fifth century BC) period contracts made by Jews indicate that the Jews of the Babylonian exile prospered in agriculture, trade and baking during the century after their settlement there and were not discriminated (Cf. Hershel Shanks, ed., *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple, Revised & Expanded Edition* [Washington: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1999], 205).

¹² Cf. John S Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann Education Publishers, 1989), 26.

¹³ In 1956 Sudan became independent from the Anglo-Egyptian rule. Southern African Sudanese and Northern Arabized Sudanese were given independence together under one nation – Sudan. The Southerners soon found themselves oppressed and exploited by the dominant Northerners. Southern Sudan liberation movement began in 1964 (In fact the seed of the movement was already sown in 1955, even before the independence, with the mutiny of the southern command soldiers who rejected the transfer of their command to the North). Peace was brokered and the South was granted a political autonomy within the union in 1972. In 1983 the military government of Sudan abolished the Southern autonomy and declared the *Sharia* (Islamic) law and made the Arabic language the *lingua franca* for the whole country. In the same year, Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement was started again, which

territory and great posterity (great number of descendents) in the promised land, and make him powerful and greatly significant among nations of the world.

The attractiveness of both having a great name and becoming a great nation can also be well understood against the backdrop of the *honor and shame* culture of the Mediterranean people (which culture Haran and Canaan were a part of) who would rather die than be dishonored or shamed. We read in 2 Samuel 17:1-23 that Ahithophel committed suicide when his advice was rejected. Amongst structures that determine one's honor and shame, such as sex roles, power, sentiment, reputation, and viewpoint, one's socio-economic status seems the strongest determining factor. As landedness means prosperity, and prosperity means higher social status, land is associated with honor and landlessness with shame. Landless people cannot become members of the assembly. In this way, land gives a place of honor in society and a people without land is a people without honor. So one of the purposes of the promise of land to the Israelites is to give them a place of honor. Also, the promised land will serve as a place where the Israelites honor God.

Peristiany, an authority on the Mediterranean (Southern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East) anthropology observes: "Honor is at the apex of the pyramid of temporal social values and it conditions their hierarchical order. Cutting across all other social classifications it divides social beings into two fundamental categories, *those endowed with honor and those deprived of it*."¹⁴ Pitt-Rivers, another influential scholar in the same field defines honor in terms of both internal and external dimensions: "Honor is the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of this society. It is his estimation of his own worth, his claim to pride, but it is also the acknowledgment of that claim, his excellence recognized by society, his right to pride."¹⁵ For the agrarian society, those who are endowed with honor are those with land and those who are covered with shame are those without land, vice versa.

The promise of greatness in *name* and *nation* here is, therefore, the climax of honor and dignity. This shows that juxtaposed to a spatial-ethnological awareness, honor and shame are experiences the promise of land will inevitably entail. The promised land will bring honor to Abraham and

military wing – Sudan Peoples Liberation Army – has been fighting the Khartoum government for more autonomy for the South for the past 18 years that have claimed more than two million lives.

¹⁴ J G Peristiany, ed., *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1966), 10 (italics mine) (quoted in Timothy S Laniak, *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther*, SBL Dissertation Series 165 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998], 26). See also, David D Gilmore, ed., *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, A Special Publication of the American Anthropological Association, Number 22 (Washington: American Anthropological Association, 1987).

¹⁵ J Pitt-Rivers, "Honor," in D L Sills, ed., *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 503 (quoted in Laniak, *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther*, 26).

his descendants. If landedness means honor, then, landlessness ultimately means shame. When she came back from Moab, Naomi (whose name means pleasant) was in bitterness and shame because she came back empty (Ru 1:20). Emptiness here definitely refers to Naomi's lack of having a living male name who would provide her with honor – no husband, no sons or grandsons – which means no inheritance (land), and no inheritance means no honor. One can feel how Naomi became pleasant again when her daughter-in-law Ruth and Boaz had a son, who would continue the name of her husband and the family land where she would live in honor and dignity (Ru 4:16-17). Although they had food and shelter in Babylon, the Israelites yet lived in shame there because of their resident alien status. They could not call the country their land. Esther and Daniel contain narratives of a life of shame in the Diaspora, and the struggle of the movement from humiliation to exaltation.¹⁶ Though the Israelites at times regained honor in the exile through faithful persons like Daniel and Esther (here beauty and character transcends landlessness and shame), being the exiled people, their shame as a nation could never be totally removed, as “to be separated from land, temple and monarchy in the ancient world was to be separated from one's source of identity as a people, *which means that one is robbed of one's honor and dignity.*”¹⁷ One of the main purposes of God in bringing the Israelites back to the land was to remove their shame and restore them to be a people of honor and dignity again (Isa 29:22; 45:17; 54:4; Joel 2:26-27; Zep 3:11).

How landedness means honor and landlessness means shame in ancient Israel can also be well understood from experiences surrounding death and burial. Death was invariably a shame and not to be properly buried in one's property in one's country (land) was a double shame to the deceased on the day of his or her death. Another thing that compounded Naomi's shame of emptiness could be the fact that her husband and sons died and were buried in a foreign land, and she was leaving them behind. Abraham's desperate need of a property where he could bury his wife Sarah can best be understood against this background of honor and shame culture (Ge 23:17-20; cf. 25:9-10). Jacob's last will was to be buried in the family's property in Canaan (Ge 49:29-32; 50:12-14). The same was true of Joseph – he asked his brothers to take his bones from Egypt to the promised land to be buried there with his fathers (Ge 50:25). This is also true of many modern societies as well.

These honor and shame experiences of Israel as a result of her landedness and landlessness respectively should help us understand the feelings and struggles of today's landless poor, resident aliens, refugees, and displaced people better.

¹⁶ Cf. Laniak, *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther*, 172.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid*, 173 (*italics added*).

As well as the material blessings of wellbeing and posterity, the promised blessing also includes spiritual blessing. In the previous chapter, we have discussed that the first and foremost condition of the promise of land is the exclusive worship of Yahweh. The spiritual blessing, here, is nothing but the privilege of knowing Yahweh and worshipping (praising) him. To know and worship the only one true and living God is indeed a great privilege and blessing. In this sense, the worship of Yahweh serves as both the conditions and purpose of the promise of land. בִּרְכָה in spiritual sense is “praise of God.” Ur and Haran probably were centers of the moon-god cult, Terah’s family religion. Abraham’s going to the promised land will, therefore, also involve leaving the gods of his fathers to embrace a new Yahweh God, the God who promises him a land and who shall also be the God of the promised land. Not only will Abraham be landed and so prosper, he will also know and experience this Yahweh God, who reveals himself as the only one true and living God. In the same way, the purpose of God in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt to the promised land is described as “then you will know that I am the Lord your God” (Ex 6:6-8; *passim*).

In Exodus 4:22-23 cf. 3:18; 5:1; we see the reason Pharaoh must let Israel go is for worshipping Yahweh:

Then say to Pharaoh, “This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, “Let my son go, so that he may worship me.” But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son” (4:22-23).

In 3:18, Moses and Aaron are to ask Pharaoh a three-day journey into the desert for the Israelites so that they may offer sacrifices to Yahweh their God. In 5:1, it is for holding a festival to Yahweh; a three-day journey, however, is not mentioned here. In 4:22-23, it is simply to worship Yahweh; it mentions neither a three-day journey nor desert. From all the three cases, it is nevertheless clear that God’s purpose in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt is to worship him, Yahweh God, as offering sacrifices and holding festivals are both part and parcel of worshipping. A three-day journey probably is a conventional expression of a short trip, not necessary an exact three-day trip. Either a three-day journey or desert would appear to be a strategy to convince Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. Definitely this is a pretext for going to the promised land as the preceding and subsequent narratives clearly indicate.

The Hebrew word for holding or celebrating festival in 5:1 is חַג. It is, asserts Sarna, basically a sacrificial feast associated with a pilgrimage to a sanctuary; and Arabic *haj*, the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, and *hadji*, the one who had performed the pilgrimage, is derived from the same stem; and the same is the case with the name of the prophet Haggai as well.¹⁸ Haggai

¹⁸ Cf. Nahum M Sarna, *Exodus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 1991), 27. Sarna also mentions that in contrary to the instruction in 3:18, the elders are not included in the actual audience with Pharaoh in 5:1. According

might have been born during one of the three Israelite pilgrimage feasts (Unleavened Bread, Pentecost or Weeks, and Tabernacles; cf. Dt 16:16). Offering sacrifices is a part of the pilgrimage feasts, and both are to be solemn acts of worship of Yahweh God in the wilderness and the promised land.

In many ways, the Old Testament is Israel's struggle towards a monotheistic belief against its polytheistic, henotheistic, and pantheistic background and surroundings. Abraham was definitely not worshipping Yahweh God in Haran. But what about the Israelites in Egypt? Did they worship Yahweh God there, the God of their fathers? Cases such as the crisis experience of Moses (Ex 3:1-4:28) and the elders response to it (Ex 4:29-31) would show that to some extent the Israelites still had some memory and experience of Yahweh. However, from the calf image in the wilderness (Ex 32), it would appear that they were not really worshipping Yahweh God there in Egypt. There could be several reasons. After the death of the patriarchs, there was none to remind them about Yahweh and to lead them in worshipping him; and so they were slowly forgetting about Yahweh God. Their long struggles under the oppression of the Egyptians, coupled by the pressure and influence of worshipping the Egyptian gods, including Pharaoh himself, could also be the cause of their syncretized life. Even if they wanted to worship Yahweh alone, they might not have had the freedom to do so.

If this was the case, then, to worship Yahweh as the reason for going out of Egypt to the promised land is ultimately legitimate. We will understand it better against the backdrop of the ancient concept of each land and people having her own god (or chief god among the gods) or the gods having their own lands and peoples. The promised land and its people would be exclusively for Yahweh, where all the commandments of Yahweh can be obeyed. However, the worship of Yahweh by the Israelites was not a henotheism. Neither was Yahweh just a particular God particularly for Israel. The Old Testament Israel, asserts March, was a "particular" that pointed beyond itself to "universals;" and she was intended, among other things, to provide a model of God's way for the world.¹⁹ In this sense, the promise of land to Israel, therefore, is not so much a gift as it is a responsibility.

to a midrash, he says, they lost their nerve, and one by one they dropped off on the way to the palace (*ibid*). See also, Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (London: Tyndale, 1973), 80.

¹⁹ W E March, *Israel and the Politics of Land*, 74.

5.2.2. To be a blessing to others

Not only Abraham will be blessed by going to the promised land, other peoples, both in his immediate context and in the entire world, shall also be blessed through him.

5.2.2.1. To the immediate context

You will be a blessing. As a result of going to the promised land and living a blessed life there, Abraham will become a blessing to those with whom he will come into contact. He will share his material blessings and his faith with others. People will see his good fortune, which would be a result of his relationship with God and with the promised land, as a desired standard and follow his God and his way of life.

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse. This is a standard blessing and curse formula. Those (notice plural participle, implies many) who accept and wish the patriarch good fortune, which includes the person and his mission, too, will receive God's blessing of wellbeing, while those who (singular, implies few) mistreats him will be punished (cf. Ge 12:10-20; 20:1-18).

Whoever curses you I will curse. The two curses employed here are two different Hebrew terms that the traditional English translations commonly render 'curse' for both. קלל is the Hebrew term for the former, meaning disdain, disparage, abuse, cause harm, whereas a much stronger word ארר is used for the latter, meaning to place under a ban, to deprive of the benefits of divine providence, referring to a judicial curse pronounced on evildoers (Ex 3:14, 17; 9:25; Dt 27:15-26). It is the standard curse formula term usually used with the plural participle, "cursed are *those* who curse," which antithetical parallel is "blessed are *those* who bless." The use of the singular milder term קלל (disdain) to Abraham by his would-be opponents and the use of a very strong term ארר (curse) for the one who merely disdains him are intriguing. Wenham asserts: "This appears to imply that those who disdain Abram will be far fewer than those who bless him. He will flourish to such an extent that few will fail to recognize that God is indeed on his side."²⁰ Sarna puts it this way: "[B]ecause the patriarch will be an unprotected stranger in an alien land, he will have particular need of God's providential care, and whoever maltreats him will be punished with exceptional severity."²¹

²⁰ G J Wenham, *Genesis 1 – 15*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1987), 277.

²¹ N Sarna, *Genesis*, 89.

5.2.2.2. To the entire world

All peoples on earth will be blessed through you. מְשַׁפָּחָה is translated here as peoples to refer to the scattered people groups from Babel. The Hebrew word for “all” (כָּל) does not always necessarily mean numerical “all” (one hundred per cent). So this text does not mean that the entire world will be blessed through Abraham during his lifetime? This is impossible. In many cases, כָּל is used to describe the magnanimity of numbers and concept. Something like what the global trotters today would say, “I have seen the whole world.” So כָּל here may mean many. Many people will be blessed through Abraham. The magnanimity of the blessing suggests that this is a blessing for the future, a blessing that would be invoked through Abraham’s faith, and a blessing that would flow from the life and witness of the Abrahamic nation. In this future aspect, כָּל can mean literal “all.” By going to, receiving blessing from, and worshipping Yahweh in the promised land, Abraham will become a blessing to *all* who embrace his faith and his life. As Israel’s subsequent witnesses to Yahweh clearly testify. Torah is entrusted to the chosen Abrahamic nation of Israel. In other words, the gift of land is for responsibility. Israel is to observe the Torah fully in the promised land in order to be an example to other lands and nations. In this way the promised land and its people shall become an instrument and standard measure in which humanity may come to know Yahweh. Israel shall be a nation among nations to be a light for others (Isa 42:6; 49:6).

Abraham did not see the promise of land with all its blessings fulfilled during his lifetime except the blessing of some moveable wealth (Ge 13:2). The promises are to be fulfilled with his descendents, generations after him. It must have been so difficult an experience for the patriarch, to have been promised a land with its blessings of posterity and name, yet wandering all his life in such a condition of an old man without land and without heir in an alien land. The land he could call his own was just a small burial place he bought (Ge 23:16-20). But Abraham lived in anticipation of the promise fulfillment. Even when Isaac, the beginning sign of the promise fulfillment, was to be cut off again, he did not complain. What a contrast to Esau who for an instant need and satisfaction had sold his firstborn son birthright of future inheritance, that includes the inheritance of the promised land for his descendents (Ge 25:19-34).

5.3. WHY WAS CANAAN CHOSEN TO BE THE PROMISED LAND?

The choice of Canaan as the promised land for Abraham and his descendants poses difficult theological-ethical issues. On the one hand, the text gives justification for the dispossession of the pagan Canaanites (Amorites) because of their detestable practices so that the land may be

claimed for the exclusive worship of Yahweh. This promise, as discussed in chapter 5, was even claimed by some early Protestant missions in North America who regarded the dispossession of the native Indians as a divine task so that the land may become the “promised land” (Christian State). On the other, it is very difficult to understand why the Canaanites had to be singled out. Even if it was because of their sins, everyone was a sinner anyway, and after all, many other pagans might not necessarily be better than the Canaanites themselves. So this can lead one to think that Yahweh was a God who practices partiality – promising a land to one at the expenses of others. Let us have a closer look at the texts.

Textual Ambiguity

As mentioned above, the promised land that Yahweh will show to Abraham was later identified as Canaan (Ge 12:5-9). Did Abraham know that the promised land was the land of Canaan? Verse 5 and the preceding P text of 11:31 seem to challenge the traditional interpretation of Abraham as having no knowledge of where the promised land was at the time of the promise. From these passages, it would appear that Abraham knew the whereabouts of the promised land. However, there is still a strong case for the traditional interpretation, attributing 12:5 to the author’s information rather than Abraham’s knowledge about the promised land. But still, chapter 11 poses a clear challenge.

In the P text of chapter 11:31, we read that Terah’s family’s was already migrating to Canaan before the land of Canaan was promised to Abram in Genesis 12. We have seen possible reasons for their leaving of Ur. Although the text does not give any reason for the family’s settlement in Haran, as mentioned above, it could be a temporary detour for some economic ends, keeping the plan of migrating to Canaan well alive. Was the promise a confirmation of this plan or totally independent of this? Or did God really promise a land to Abraham?

Could it be that Genesis 11:31 is an older tradition that explains how Abraham and his family settled in Canaan, that is, by way of a normal migration? If that is the case, then, the promise concept of Genesis 12:1 onwards could be, as discussed above, later redactioned texts to make Canaan the promised land in order to justify the dispossession of the original inhabitants of the land during the conquest and settlement. Later, after the fall of the Northern Kingdom and when Judah was also threatened by the impending exile during the last part of the Judean monarchy, this promise concept was reemphasized to assure the continued possession of the land. Or there is also possibility that the promise of land theme appeared during the late monarchic period independently of the conquest and settlement motives. Or it could well also be a back projection during the exile. The patriarch Abraham was back projected to have received the promise of land

on which ground the Israelites were brought out of Egypt and given the promised land in order to give hope and motivation for the return to the land from the Babylonian exile. Compare the three standard “brought you out of” formulas used for Abraham’s going to Canaan from Ur/Haran, the Israelites’ going to Canaan from Egypt, and the exiled Israelites returning to the land:

I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it (Ge 15:7).

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery (Ex 20:2 cf. 6:6-8; Jer 32:21-23).

I will bring them back from Egypt and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them to Gilead and Lebanon, and there will not be room enough for them (Zec 10:10 cf. Ne 9:7-15).

As discussed earlier, our task is not to rediscover the history of the promise of land, but to study its theological-ethical implications. So even though it will be interesting and challenging to do further research on the history of the promise of land, we will leave it here for future research. We will now analyze the textual reasons for choosing Canaan as the promised land. First of all, more than three hundred references to the promise of land (direct and allusion) to Abraham in the Old Testament surely presents a strong case for the legitimacy of associating the promise tradition with Abraham. We do not have answers for many odd texts in the Bible unless new discoveries emerge. For such cases we just have to accept them as God’s sovereign plan. However, that does not mean that we should not attempt to understand the oddness of the texts. We have to explore all possible avenues to understand it. For our present task, there are at least two texts that give reasons for the choice of Canaan. The priestly tradition gives the sins of the Canaanites itself as the reason for the dispossession of their land, whereas the Deuteronomistic tradition seems to give both the sins of the Amorites and the quality of the land itself (oozing milk and honey) as the reasons.

The sins of the Amorites

As the sun was setting, Abraham fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and ill-treated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterwards they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure (Ge 15:12-16).

Hear, O Israel. You are now about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than you, with large cities that have walls up to the sky. The people are strong and tall – Anakites! You know about them and have heard it said: “Who can stand up against the Anakites?” But be assured today that the Lord your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the Lord has promised you. After the Lord your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourselves, “The Lord has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness.” No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is going to drive them out before you. It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Dt 9:1-5).

But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you (Lev 18:26-28).

Reading between and behind the lines of both the Dtr texts (Genesis and Deuteronomy) and P text (Leviticus) seem to shed some light that the authors are uncomfortable about the seeming favoritism of Yahweh – who wills good for Israel and evil for the Canaanites. The intellectual and religious leaders of Israel seem to be in a difficult position to justify their occupation of others' lands as it is incompatible with their Yahweh's claim to be the God of all, including the Canaanites themselves. The obscure nature of the textual claims notwithstanding, this is the stronger reason of the two, definitely a theological-ethical reason, for the dispossession of the Canaanites.

The Old Testament describes the social customs and religious practices of the Canaanites as abominations or detestable things (Lev 18:9-15, 24-30; 19:2; Dt 8:19; 9:1, 4-6; *passim*). This is confirmed now by archaeological artifacts and from their own epic literature, discovered at Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit) on the north Syrian coast. Their religion was polytheistic, which included child sacrifice, idolatry, religious prostitution and divination²² (cf. Dt 18:9-11). But again, why were the Canaanites singled out? Was it because they practiced the most detestable things of all nations? Within the context of the ANE, the answer seems positive. Yahweh who deals with Abraham and the Israelites within their geographical and historical limitations would not have them go to the Far East, Europe, Southern Africa, Oceania, or America, even if these peoples too practiced most detestable things. Then again, we should notice that God would also judge Israel as he judged other nations before them if they sinned (Lev 18:28). In other words, if God would use Israel to punish the sinful Canaanites, in the same way, he would use other nation(s) to punish Israel if they disobeyed him. We are reminded of how God used the Babylonians to dispossess the Israelites of the land. We are also reminded of the destruction of Sodom and Gommorah because of their great sins. Yahweh in his justice and sovereignty can punish any nation at any time by any means.

As Weinfeld has pointed out above (chapter 2), the Canaanites were not annihilated. In other words, the pre-Israelite population were allowed to live in the land and were absorbed into the Israelite community if they were willing to come under the rule and laws of Yahweh. In fact, as Tigay observes, Israel envisages friendly relations with most other nations. It values their good

²² Cf. Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land?* (Tring: Lion Publishing, 1983), 106-108; *The Compact NIV Study Bible* (1985), 31.

opinion (Dt 4:6), expects foreigners to visit and trade with Israel, permits most (including escaped slaves) to settle in the promised land, marry Israelites, and eventually to join the popular Assembly (Dt 21:10-14; 23:27), except members of a few nations who are denied this privilege temporarily or permanently because of their unfriendliness toward them in the past. Resident aliens are given equal protection under the civil law and the benefits of many religious laws are extended to them, such as Sabbath rest, except for economic obligations such as interest free loans and remission of debts in the seventh year and/or in the Year of Jubilee,²³ which are applicable only to fellow Israelites. As ruler of all nations, it is, in fact, Yahweh who also gave land to other nations. Israel was cautioned that it has no right to the Transjordan lands as it was Yahweh who gave these lands to them.²⁴

The setting of the limitations of conquest (borders) clearly shows that the promise of land and its conquest are particular and once for all events. Israel was not to continue to conquer the lands beyond the promised land borders; neither is the same promise to come to any other nations, because, as a model, the Old Testament Israel represented the whole earth. Therefore, no people or nation, including modern day Israel, can claim this Old Testament land promise to dispossess or conquer other nations in order to establish one's dominion and religion.

A land that oozes milk and honey

During the exodus, the promised land was described as a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex 3:8 cf. verse 17):

So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing²⁵ with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

The Israelites were then reminded about it time and again especially during the wilderness, conquest and exile (cf. Ex 13:5; 33:3; Lev 20:24; Nu 13:27; 14:8; 16:13-14; Dt 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20; Jos 5:6; Jer 11:5; 32:22; Eze 20:6, 15). Was it to emphasize the quality of the land or something else or both?

Tigay informs us that milk and honey were regarded as necessary and choice foods in Ancient Israel. They were offered to guests and given as gifts. Though one may wonder whether the promised land really qualifies as “oozing milk and honey” archaeological evidences have

²³ Foreigners were not probably bound by the Torah laws (but this needs further research), so they could possibly keep lands (properties) they purchased from the Israelites; as such they were not supposed to enjoy these benefits and privileges.

²⁴ J H Tifay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 1996), xvi.

²⁵ Rather, “oozing” as the Hebrew word זָרַח refers to bodily organs leaking fluids, in poetry, to water gushing (see Lev 15 and Ps 78:20).

indicated that Syro-Palestine was in fact far more fertile than it became after the Jews were exiled. “Oozing milk and honey” is thus a favorite phrase for describing the fertility of the land of Israel. The Egyptian texts that described the abundance of the region as:

It was a good land.... Figs were in it, and grapes. It had more than water. Plentiful was its honey, abundant its olives. Every (kind of) fruit was on its trees. Barley was there, and emmaer. There was no limit to any (kind of) cattle.... Bread was made ... as daily fare, wine as daily provision, cooked meat and roast fowl, beside the wild beasts of the desert ... and milk was used in all cooking²⁶.

Westenholz also discovers how profoundly Pharaoh Sahure and Thutmose III described the fertility of the land of Canaan. Pharaoh Sahure, second monarch of the Fifth Dynasty of Egypt (2456-2446 BC), said that the olive trees were not to be found in profusion in Egypt, whereas in Canaan they abounded. Thutmose III (1479-1425 BC) had the walls of the Temple of Karnak carved with texts and depictions concerning the extraordinary sights that met his eyes on his campaigns into Canaan: “And His Majesty saw the land of Djahi and lo! All its gardens were full of fruit. The wines are stored in cellars and flow like rivers.... And the men of His Majesty’s army were anointed with oil of olives day after days.”²⁷ This is indeed a sure promised land for an agrarian society.

Why would the fertility of the land be emphasized during the time of exodus (from Egypt) and the exilic and post-exilic periods? Why weren’t the patriarchs told about it? The patriarchs did not need to be attracted by the plenty of the land. The promise was very loud and clear. So they needed just to obey; God would take care of the rest. Besides, at any rate, to have a permanent land to settle was far better and more attractive than living a nomadic life all the time. For the Israelites in Egypt, the quality of the land, however, needed to be emphasized to attract the Israelites to be willing to come out of Goshen, a good land, where some might have still been enjoying its produce (Ge 47:5-6). For those who were landless slaves, the land that oozes milk and honey would be a real promised land (Ex 1). For the post-exilic Babylonian Jews, who were living a good life in the good land of Babylon, the emphasis on the fertility of the promised land was needed in order to make it attractive and desirable to return to (2 Kgs 18:31-32). In spite of this, the fact was that many Babylonian exiled Jews did not return to the land till 1948, the year of the creation of the modern Israeli State.

²⁶ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 75, 438. Quotations are from the ANET, 19-20. For the final clause, see H. Fischer, *Varia* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976), 97-98. This area (called Yaa or Araru) was perhaps in the Bekaa Valley or northern Transjordan; cf. Ahituv, *Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, and Leiden: Brill, 1984), 66-67.

²⁷ Joan Goodnick Westenholz (ed.), *Sacred Bounty Sacred Land: The Seven Species of the Land of Israel* (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem, 1998), 15-16. See pp 13-16 for further descriptions.

On the other hand, the emphasis might not be necessarily on the fertility ground alone. It could well also be an emphasis of an ordered and stable normal life. Milk and honey were the staple foods for the nomads of the ANE (honey was more of a luxury). So “oozing milk and honey” could be a traditional and proverbial phrase to describe the normal life of the pastoral hill country of Canaan in contradistinction to the chaotic life in Egypt and Babylon. Life in the promised land would be a life of, for, and with the land and with Yahweh. There would be work, there would be food, and there would be rest as well, and they would run their own course. Everything will be normal. If so, this is even more desirable and attractive than just being a mere fertile land.

5.4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of the promise of land is for blessing and worshipping Yahweh. The land will give both material and spiritual blessing for both the Israelites and other nations. By spiritual blessing, it means that the promised land will give Israel the privilege of knowing God and enjoying him. However, in order to realize this promise of blessing, the Israelites must meet all the conditions of the promise of land. In so doing, they must observe all the stipulations of the land covenant Yahweh entered with them. They must exclusively worship Yahweh alone (Dt 6:4), they must live a holy life (Ex 19:6; Lev 11:44; 19:2), they must practice righteousness and justice (Ge 18:9), and they must share the land and take care of it. Are these conditions of the promise of land binding for Christians, for that matter, all humanity, today, in order to fulfill God’s purpose of the promise of land in our lives as a nation, ethnic group and individuals? If so, in which way? In the following concluding chapter, we will conclude our research by answering these questions by discussing possible implications for contemporary ethical decision making when faced with land issues.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSION:

Possible implications for contemporary ethical decision-making

In the light of the preceding chapters, our final task is to articulate some general conclusions and possible implications for contemporary ethical decision-making on land issues facing the church and the world today. With the emergence of economic capitalization, industrialization and globalization, it is hoped that land problems will decrease even if they do not disappear. However, the opposite seems to be true. Although it is true that land and economic wellbeing can no longer be equated in many places for many people, its emotional angle – the root of existence – is still very much alive. It has become alive even more than ever before among many ethnic groups due to their awakened awareness of their roots and rights facilitated by their newly experienced democratic principles of freedom. It should also be noted that the economics of many families, societies and countries are still agricultural based economies. Therefore, the issue of land is still very much (even getting bigger) a problem facing the church and the world today. As such, guiding visions are needed.

In the following, we will outline possible implications for contemporary ethical decision-making. They are a summary of theological-ethical principles that have been discussed in the previous chapters. It is not easy to find quick solutions that will please everyone. Nonetheless, I will attempt to do so, as the cost of indifference can be more harmful than giving a positive proposal even if the proposal is not accepted as it is hoped.

On the assumption, “this is our God-given land”

Every individual and society needs land, a part of the earth, for support and development. In the Old Testament, every nation’s (biblical concept of nation based on ethnic identity, not modern political nation state) land is described as a God-given land.¹ This concept (or rather fact) claims Yahweh as the divine sovereign over the universe, including the planet earth and his involvement in the history of all nations. As the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites, too, received their lands from God (cf. Dt 2:5, 9, 19), Israel had no right whatsoever to any of those lands. The fact that the border limits of the promised land were explicitly mentioned is in line with this concept – no one has a right to others’ lands.² This is a possible implication for today’s inter-ethnic

¹ Cf. Ge 16:10-12; 17:20; 21:18, 20; 25:23; 1 Ki 19:15; 2 Ki 5:1; 8:7-15; Dt 2:5, 9, 19, 32:8; Am 2:1-2; 9:7.

² This concept represents the practice of the royal land grant of the ANE covenant discussed above (chap. 3). God as the divine sovereign is here granting territories to his vassals. Hittite royal land grants often include explicit warnings not to encroach on the territories given to other vassals (cf. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 24-25, who cites Moseh

relationship; every people group's ethnicity and "God-given" land must be respected, which means no one has the right to conquer or occupy others' lands. Neither may a particular land be annexed to (make) a union against the will of the people of the land nor may people ever be forcefully removed from their lands.

On the other hand, the Old Testament also gives us a picture of different ethnic groups living together in the land. Perhaps both the Middle East and other parts of the world where there are claims and counter claims of lands can learn a lesson or two from the patriarch Abraham. After they came back to Canaan from their famine sojourn in Egypt, Abraham and Lot ended up with a land dispute. Although Abraham surely would have remembered that Canaan was exclusively for him and his descendants as the Lord had promised, for the sake of peace he was willing to share it with his nephew Lot or even to sacrifice it, if Lot's choice would result in that way:

So Abraham said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarrelling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left." Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, towards Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out towards the east. The two men parted company: Abraham lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom (Ge 13:8-12).

The prophet Ezekiel also spoke of the new promised land that would be shared by both the tribes of Israel and aliens in the land:

"You are to distribute this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. You are to allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who have settled among you and who have children. You are to consider them as native-born Israelites; along with you they are to be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe the alien settles, there you are to give him his inheritance," declares the Sovereign Lord (Eze 47:21-23).

On land sharing

As argued above, the strongest argument for land sharing should come from the creation theology itself – the fact that God, as the creator, is the ultimate owner of the earth and he gave it collectively to the whole human family. But, sad to say, to present a case for land sharing and land caring from the creation point of view is no longer a logical argument for many people today, especially in the capitalistic industrialized materialistic societies whose decisions, values, goals, and relationships have no reference to God at all, let alone faith in creation. Even in Christian circles, there are some, though they do believe in the existence of God, who doubt the facts and events of the creation story presented in Genesis 1-3. This generation's unbelief notwithstanding, God remains the creator and giver of the earth for and to all humanity. So

Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic School* [Oxford, 1972], 72). According to Genesis Rabba 74:15, Edom and Moab later applied this concept and claimed that David had no right to conquer them, but were overruled since they had previously voided the law by attacking Israel (cf. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 38 [n. 9 of Dt 2-3]).

everyone has a right to land and a responsibility to share it with other fellow human beings who are his/her family members in Yahweh.

Although the majority viewpoint is not always necessarily the right one, in many times, it nonetheless represents the right view, and the majority of Muslims, Jews, and Christians do believe that God is the creator of all, as it is clearly revealed in the Bible. However, the belief in the existence of God and his creation of all things including the earth and human beings requires faith. But this statement of faith in God, warns March, can rather create suspicion than good will, as “many crimes against people and land have been committed in the name of God in the past.”³ Therefore, those of us who want to promote relatively equal land sharing today must demonstrate it by our faith and our life, for actions speak louder than words. March rightly captures a creation-driven vision for the world:

As the Creator, God has a rightful claim on earth, a claim that no human individual or government can invalidate. Planet Earth belongs to God. As Creator, God can and has set rules and intends that human beings will respect and live within them. Earth is to be responsibly tended as a luxurious garden for the benefit of the whole human family. Earth is not to be exploited by or for anyone. Earth, God’s good land, has been placed in human hands by a loving Creator who desires that all live in harmony and prosperity – that is, in *shalom*, peace.⁴

On land caring

Land sharing and land caring will attain God’s desired level only if humankind worships the creator God, lives in holiness and pursues righteousness and justice. In this way, land will become a blessing to all its inhabitants. As we have discussed above (chap 4), the earth is not holy intrinsically. But since it belongs to the Holy God and we are only his tenants (Lev 25:23), we are therefore to treat it “sacredly” and sensitively. It should also be noted that the earth, with its atmosphere, is delicate and fragile, and will not stand the limitless exploitation of it. God created us in his likeness and put us in this planet earth so that he might delegate the responsibilities of taking care of his good earth to us, and he did. So we have the responsibility to take care of this earth to preserve the beauty and fecundity of it for the good of all, both now and in future generations.

Being created in his likeness also entails the likeness in his holiness, righteousness and justice. Breaking God’s holiness codes (discussed in chapter 4) is a sign that one is not treating and relating to the earth in the way God intended. If mankind pursues righteousness and justice and lives in holiness, there will be peace and harmony, because they will not exploit one another, neither will they destroy the earth and its atmosphere. If we make holiness, righteousness and

³ March, *Israel and the Politics of Land*, 86.

⁴ *ibid*, 84 (italics his).

justice our aims, then we will be sensitive to and supportive of the least among us, particularly the homeless and the poor (Lev 19:9-10; Dt 24:17-22). For the Old Testament, the use of land is tied directly to doing justice, loving one's neighbor, and maintaining a holy relationship with God, for "caring for the land and for one another is the standard by which land occupancy is measured."⁵

Ecological theology and creation theology cannot be separated. The earth is not created to sustain a limitless exploitation of it. Yes, the earth is to be exploited, but not to the extent of destroying its ecology. If the exploitation of this delicate and fragile earth of ours by the limitless capitalized and industrialized consumer economy continues unchecked like this, a time will surely come when the earth can no longer sustain its exploitation. We have heard that pollution in many cities and countries have reached danger signals. We also have heard about the alarmingly increasing global warming. A time has surely come for responsible citizens of this planet earth to make a united effort in the caring of the mother earth. High-rise apartment dwellers in cities may feel unconcerned about land and its related issues. It is true that they do not directly relate to land. However, if they still want to eat and drink, then they too must be concerned about the welfare of the land.

The promise of land as a theological-ethical metaphor

(1) The promise of land is the promise of God's presence itself. As the promised land is a conditional gift, God's presence among his people is also conditional. If the Israelites are in possession of the land and the land is yielding its produce, then it is a sign that God is present in the land because they are pleasing him by observing the conditions of the promise of land. If they are losing the land or the land is not yielding its produce, then it is an indication that the Lord is forsaking them because they are violating the conditions of the promise of land. The conditions of the promise of land are still binding and applicable for us today. The degree of our observation of it, therefore, serves as a standard measure for the level of our commitment to and relationship with God.

(2) The promise of land to be Israel's נחלה (inheritance) is the promise of the eternal נחלה and the promise of land for מנוח (rest) is the promise of peace with and in God. This is an eschatological hope – the promise of land as the promise of the eternal life in heaven and Israel's rest in the land as believers' peace with and in God. As possession and continual possession of the נחלה and

⁵ Cf. *ibid*, 92.

מנוח in it will depend on Israel's observation of the conditions of the promise of land, so shall be the possession of the eternal נחלה and blessed peace with and in God by those who believe in him and do his will (Mt 7:21).

(3) The promise of land is the revelation of God himself. Yahweh reveals himself to his people Israel through the promise of land. Observing the conditions of the promise of land is in fact experiencing Yahweh himself. The promised land, as a space, is a place where this revelation is received and experienced. In the same way, observing the conditions of the promise of land today can and shall help us experience and know God better. Seeing the wonders of God's creations (heaven and earth and all that are in it) brings humans to the realization of the existence of the creator-God.

(4) The promise of land is not so much a privilege as it is a responsibility. As the promised land and its people Israel were to serve as models for other lands and peoples, the Church and Christians today are called to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Mt 5:13). Christians have a lot to contribute in bringing hope to this hopeless world – hope to the despair, hope to the weary, and hope to the hopeless homeless – because we have resources and power that are not available to other people and institutions – resources and power from the Holy Spirit. If we diligently and joyfully observe the theological-ethical principles of land promise discussed in this thesis, we can surely change the world for the better. Past failures and mistakes were there, but they can be and must be corrected. Amends must be made. The ever-increasing evil forces and problems of the world should not overwhelm us and so passively sit back in despair. To do so, as Botman who dares to hope warns, will mean losing faith in God itself:

[I]f any Christian should give up hope for any one (even the smallest) of the creatures of God (whether it is a child or an orchid), that person has abandoned all hope for the future of God as Creator. Such hopelessness is a faithlessness that constitutes godlessness. The pursuit of Christian hope in an era of global despair rests, not so much on the natural potential of nature as on the potent commitment and faithfulness of the Creator to the works (creation) of God's hands.⁶

It's a high time to do what must be done lest the world waits too long.

God gives land to all

The promise of land in the Old Testament reveals God's fundamental will that everyone has a place. This phenomenological approach automatically overrules Christian teachings from certain quarters that sacrifice the physical needs of the poor at the altar of his/her spiritual needs; one's needs of a home here at the altar of one's golden home in life hereafter. This inevitably

⁶ H Russel Botman, *The End of Hope or New Horizon of Hope? An outreach of those in Africa who dare to hope*, Inaugural Address (Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch, 2001)

challenges the landed people to be concerned about their landless fellow-humans. Everyone has a right to enjoy God's gift of land and home in this world.

God wills land to everyone, so everyone has a right to land. If we share and manage the earth, God's creation-gift, according to the will of the giver, it is sufficient to provide a home for everyone and meet his or her needs. The theological-ethical teaching of the promise of land in the Old Testament assures these material (wellbeing) and spiritual (knowledge of Yahweh) blessings if we follow its conditions. The blessings of the promise of land shall be for us if we exclusively and truthfully worship Yahweh, live a life of holiness, love and pursue righteousness and justice, and share and care for the earth precariously. Not only will we be blessed, the world will also be blessed in and through us. It is befitting to conclude this thesis with the words of Mahatma Gandhi:

**The riches of the earth are enough to meet everyone's need,
but not to satisfy everyone's greed.**

APPENDIX 1:

Distribution of land promise texts among the Deuteronomistic and priestly theological traditions. There are not many land promise texts in the wisdom literature. There are some references in Psalms, listed again here, which are already listed in table 2.

Promisory words	In Deuteronomistic History	In Priestly Writing	In Psalms
אמר Promise	Nu 14:40; Ne 9:23		
דבר Promise	Ex 12:25; Dt 6:3; 9:28; 12:20; 19:8; 27:3; Jos 22:4; 23:5; 23:10; 23:15; 1 Ki 8:56; Jer 32:42-43; 33:14		
שבוע Swear	Ge 22:6, 16; 24:7; 26:3; 50:24-25; Ex 13:5, 11; 32:13; 33:1; Nu 11:12; 14:16, 21-23; 32:11; Dt 1:8, 35; 6:10, 18, 23; 7:13; 8:1; 10:11; 11:9, 21; 19:8; 26:3; 28:11; 30:20; 34:4; Jos 1:6; 5:6; 21:43; Jdg 2:1; Jer 11:5; 32:22		
נתן Give	Ge 12:6-7 cf. 12:1; 13:14-17; 15:7-8, 18; 24:6-7; 26:2-3; 28:13; 48:3-5; Ex 12:25; 13:5, 11; 32:13; 20:12; 33:1; Nu 14:8; 15:2; 16:14; 20:12; 32:5-9, 33; 33:53; 34:13; 36:2; Dt 1:8, 25, 35; 2:12, 24, 29-31; 3:12-13, 18-20; 4:1, 38; 5:15, 31; 6:10, 23; 7:13; 8:10; 9:6, 23; 10:11; 11:9, 17, 21, 31; 12:1, 10; 15:4-7; 16:20; 17:14; 18:9; 19:1-3; 8-10, 14; 21:1, 23; 24:4; 25:15, 19; 26:1-2; 27:2-3; 28:8-12; 25:19; 26:9-10, 15; 28:52; 29:8; 30:20; 31:7, 23; Jos 1:2, 6, 10, 13-15; 2:9, 14; 5:6; 8:1; 9:24; 11:23; 18:3; 19:49; 21:41-43; 22:4; 23:13, 15-16; 24:3, 8, 13; 1 Ki 8:36; 9:7; 14:15; 2 Ki 21:8; 1 Ch 6:55; 16:18; 22:17; 2 Ch 6:27, 36-39; 7:14, 20; 14:6-7; Jer 3:18-19; 7:7; 11:5; 16:15; 17:4; 24:10; 25:5; 30:3; 32:22; 35:15; Am 9:15	Ge 17:8; 28:4; 35:12-15; Ex 6:4-8; Lev 14:34; 20:24; 23:10; 25:2; 25:38; 26:4-6; Nu 13:1; 20:24; 27:12; Dt 32:49-52; 34:4; Ne 9:8; 15; Eze 11:15-17; 20:15, 28, 42; 28:25; 33:23; 37:25; 45:8; 47:14	Ps 105:8-11, 42-45; 135:8-12; 136:16-20
על, בוא בוא Bring	Ge 15:7; 28:15; 48:21; 50:24; Ex 3:8, 17; 12:17; 13:5, 11; 16:3; 33:1; Nu 13:27; 14:8, 16, 24; 15:18; 16:13-14; 32:5, 17; Dt 1:8; 4:1, 38; 6:10, 18, 23; 7:1; 8:1; 9:4, 28; 11:29; 26:2, 9; 28:63; 29:27; 30:5; 31:20-23; Jos 1:11; 24:8; Jdg 2:1; 1 Ki 8:34; 2 Ch 6:25; Isa 14:1; Jer 2:6-7; 12:15; 16:14-15; 23:7-8; 24:6; 30:3; 32:2, 22; Am 2:10; Zec 10:10	Ex 6:8; Lev 18:3; 20:22; 25:38; Nu 14:3, 31; 20:22; Eze 20:6, 15, 28, 42; 34:13, 36:24; 37:12, 21; 38:8; 40:2	Ps 85:1
נחלה Inheritance	Ex 23:30; 32:13; Nu 16:14; 26:52-55; 32:32; 33:54; 34:1-2, 13, 18, 29; 36:2; Dt 3:28; 4:21, 38; 12:10; 15:4; 19:3, 10, 14; 21:23; 24:4; 25:19; 26:1; 29:8; 31:7; Jos 1:6; 11:23; 13:7; 14:1, 9; 17:6; 18:4; 19:49; Jdg 2:6; 1 Ki 8:36; 1 Ch 16:18; 28:8; 2 Ch 6:27; Isa 57:13; Jer 3:18; 12:14; 16:18; Zec 2:16 (English 2:12)	Ge 28:4; Lev 20:24; Ezra 9:12; Eze 33:23-24; 45:1; 47:13-14; 48:29	Ps 105:11; 136 :16-22
אחזה Possession	Ge 48:4; 49:30; 50:13; Nu 32:5, 22, 29-32; 35:28; Dt 2:12; 3:20; 32:49; Jos 1:15; 22:4, 9, 19	Ge 17:8; Lev 14:34; 25:10, 24; 27:24; Eze 11:15; 36:5; 45:8	Ps 44:3
ירש Possess	Ge 15:7; Nu 14:24; 33:53; Dt 1:8, 21; 2:24, 31; 3:18-20; 4:1, 5, 14, 22, 26; 5:31, 33; 6:1, 18; 7:1; 8:1; 9:4-6, 23; 10:11; 11:8, 10-11, 29, 31; 12:1, 29; 15:4; 16:20; 17:14; 19:2, 14; 21:1; 23:20; 25:19; 28:21, 63; 30:5, 16, 18; 31:13; 32:47; Jos 1:10; 18:3; 23:5; 24:8; Jdg 2:6; 18:9; 1 Ch 28:8; Isa 14:2; 41:2; 57:13; 61:7, 21; Jer 30:3; Am 2:10; Hab 1:6	Lev 20:24; Ezra 9:11; Ne 9:15, 23; Eze 33:25-26	Ps 37:29, 37:34

This classification is not to be taken as a proof text that is based on historical facts. It is a broad and general classification only. The purpose of the classification following the theological traditions is to aid future research that may be based on a particular tradition and to help us identify the tradition of a text when we need to study it in the backdrop of its tradition in this thesis.. The maximum occurrences of the promise of land, as the table illustrates, are found in the Deuteronomistic History, followed by the Priestly Writing. The Wisdom Literature is almost silent in terms of direct references, except an allusion to it such as such as Proverbs 2:21-22;

10:30. The classification between the Deuteronomistic History and Priestly Writing for Genesis through 2 Kings follows Peckham's hypothesis.¹

Peckham's J and E materials are put under the Deuteronomistic History as their theological concept is closer to the Deuteronomistic theology than that of the Priestly. All the Prophetic Literature, except Ezekiel that is included in the Priestly Writing, and all the narratives, except Ezra and Nehemiah that are put under the Priestly Writing, are included in the Deuteronomistic History.

APPENDIX 2: RECENT DEVELOPMENT OF THE *DALIT* MOVEMENT IN INDIA

The following two news articles on the recent *Dalit* movement are interesting. The *Dalits* believe that by abandoning their "oppressive" religion they will be freed from the bondage of poverty. Will this deliver its promise remained to be seen.

In what is being billed as the largest mass conversion in history, up to one million low-caste Hindus or dalits are expected to convert to Buddhism.... Leaders of the dalits, formerly known as "untouchables", say the change of religion will free them from the scourge of the discriminatory caste system and the abuses they suffer on a daily basis.... "Caste is our main problem", says a dalit leader, Mr Ram Raj, who will be among those converted. "It pervades all aspects of life in India, though it is not always visible. This is our way of escaping the misery of living on the margins of society." ... Discrimination by caste is outlawed in India but remains part of life for millions of people, particularly in rural areas. Such tasks as raising pigs, cremating the dead and cleaning latrines are traditionally reserved for dalits.... In many villages, they cannot drink from the same cups or even the same wells. Even primary school children are divided in the classroom according to cast. The government has passed a package of legislation to increase the dalits' work and social opportunities, including set quotas for dalits in political bodies, government jobs and education. But critics say discrimination is so pervasive that it continues to hamper the social advancement of dalits.²

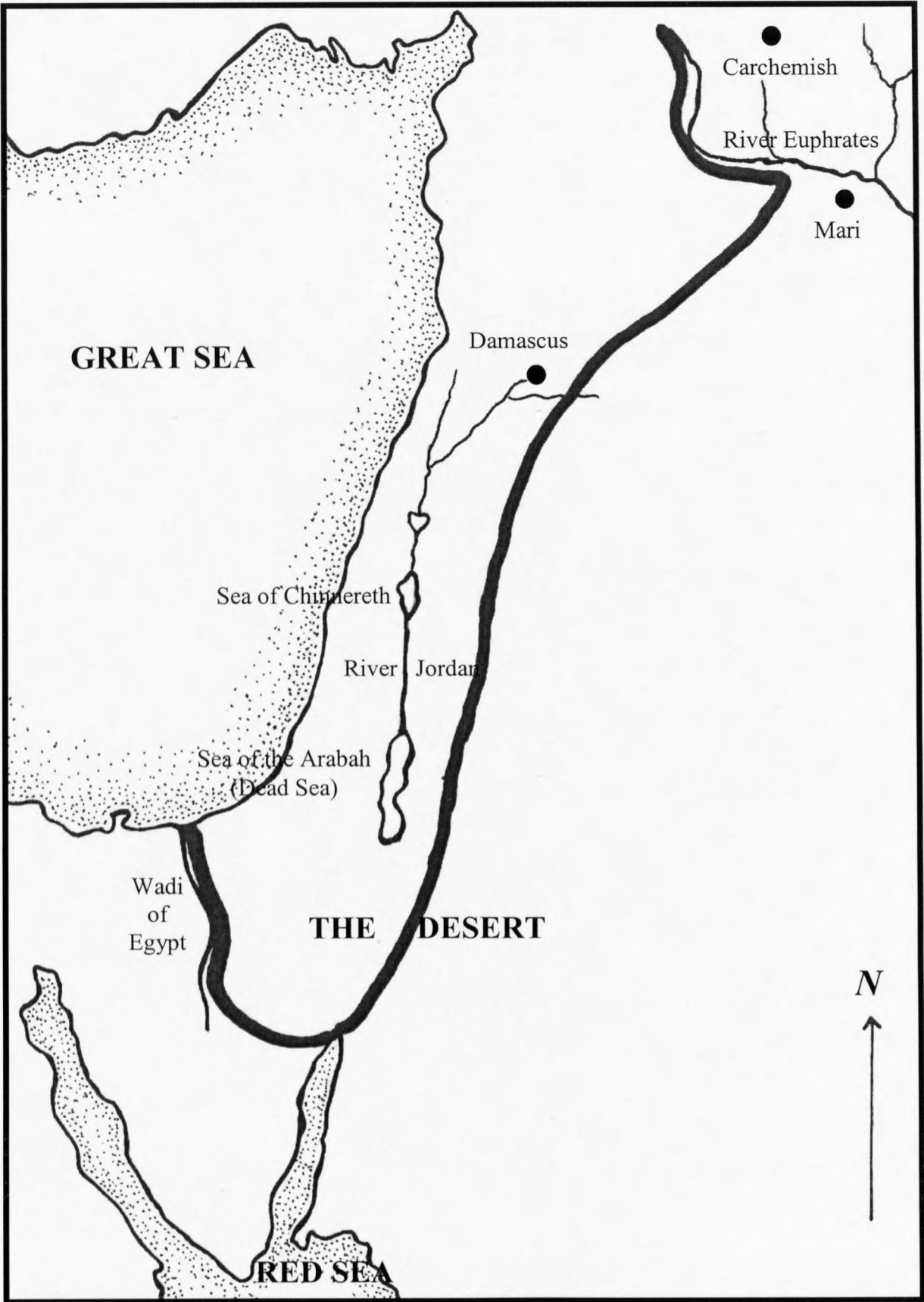
More than 20,000 lower caste Hindus were converted to Buddhism at a ceremony in New Delhi yesterday, in an attempt to free themselves from discrimination. Organizers claimed that police, who feared that the event would provoke religious unrest, prevented thousands of potential converts from taking part in the ceremony at a prominent location in the city. Ram Raj, the organizer, was the first to be converted ... He claimed that thousands of Dalits, officially termed Scheduled Castes, had been arrested to stop them attending. More than a million Dalits were originally expected to attend, he said.... Sri Chand, a Delhi labourer, said: We do not want to be slaves any more by remaining Hindu. We have converted to Buddhism where all people are considered equal and there are no discriminations." Nearly a third of India's population of one billion are Dalits, meaning "broken people". Huge numbers live below the poverty line, eat infrequently, have no homes or permanent jobs and depend on the "munificence" of Hindu gods for survival. The Scheduled Castes are treated in society as untouchables, openly victimized and often assaulted by upper caste people for defying their orders, even though caste discrimination was outlawed in 1950.³

¹ B Peckham, *The Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*, HSM 35 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993).

² David Orr, "A Million Low-Caste Hindus to Convert to Bhuddism (sic), *The Irish Times on the Web*, ireland.com (Thursday, November 1, 2001).

³ Rahul Bedi, "Buddists Convert Low-Caste Hindus", news.telegraph.co.uk (Filed: 05/11/2001).

APPENDIX 3: The promised land according to the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants
that was attained during David's reign



(The map is not drawn to scale.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alt, A 1966. Wilson R A (trs). *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. This English translation is a selection from Alt's essays on the history of Israel, *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, I, II, III, München, 1953, 1959, 1964.
- Ames, F R 1997. דבר. *NIDOTE* Vol 2, 912-915.
- Anderson B W 1999. *Contours of Old Testament Theology*. Minneapolis: Scholars Press.
- Barton, J (1984) 1996. *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Bandstra, B L 1986. "Land." *ISBE* Vol 3, 71-72.
- BDB*. 1998. Oak Harbor: Logos Research System.
- Bedi, R 2001. "Buddists Convert Low-Caste Hindus", *news.telegraph.co.uk*, 05/11/2001.
- Binz, S J 1993. *The God of Freedom and Life: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*. Minnesota: The Liturgical Press.
- Birch, B C 1991. *Let Justice Roll Down*. Philadelphia: Westminster.
- Birch, B C, et al. 1999. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Blenkinsopp, J 1992. *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible*. New York: Doubleday.
- 1995. *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Boadt, L 2000. "Wisdom, Wisdom Literature." *EDB*, 1380-1382.
- Boorer, S 1992. *The Promise of Land as Oath: A Key to the Formation of Pentateuch*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Bosch, D J 1991. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. American Society of Missiology Series, No. 16. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis.
- Bosman, H L, Gous, I G P, and Spangenberg, I J J (eds.) 1991. *Plutocrats and Paupers: Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Bosman, H L 2001. Poverty in the Old Testament: Poverty in Prophetic Literature. Seminar Notes.
- Botman, H R 2001. *The End of Hope or New Horizon of Hope? An Outreach of Those in Africa Who Dare to Hope*, Inaugural Address. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch.
- Brueggemann, W 1977. *The Land: Places as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, in Brueggemann, W & Donahue, J R (eds.) (OBT). Philadelphia: Fortress.
- 1991. *To Build, to Plant: A Commentary on Jeremiah 26-52* (ITC). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- 1994. "Exodus: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." *NIB*, 677-981.
- 1997. *Theology of the Old Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Cape Times*, October 22, 2001. Elderly woman vanishes from house after relative discusses old age home, 3.
- Carpenter, E 1997. ירש. *NIDOTE* Vol 2, 549-550.

- Carroll, R P 1986. *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (OTL). Philadelphia: Westminster.
- Cassuto, U (1951 Hebrew) 1967. *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University.
- Chapman, C 1983. *Whose Promised Land?* Tring, Herts: Lion Publishing.
- Childs, B S 1974. *Exodus: A Commentary* (OTL). London: SCM.
- 1993. *Biblical Theology in the Old and New Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Coggins, R J 1990. 2 Kings 23, 29: "A Problem of Method in Translation," in Brekelmans, C & Lust, J (eds), *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies: Papers Read at the XIIIth IOSOT Congress Leuven 1989*, 67-90. Leuven: University Press. (BETL XCIV.)
- Cole, A 1973. *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC). London: Tyndale.
- Cross, F M 1977. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Dam, C V 1997. חלק. *NIDOTE* Vol 2, 161-163.
- Davies, W D 1974. *The Gospel and the Land*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- De Gruchy, J W 1979. *The Church Struggle in South Africa*. Cape Town: D Phillip.
- Durham, J 1987. *Exodus* (WBC). Waco: Word.
- Edwards, Brian (ed.) 1998. *Homosexuality: The Straight Agenda*. Facing the Issue. Epsom, Surrey: Day One Publications.
- Eynikel, E 1990. "Prophecy and Fulfillment in the Deuteronomistic History (1 Kgs 13; 2 Kgs 23, 16-18)," in Brekelmans, C & Lust, J (eds), *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies: Papers Read at the XIIIth IOSOT Congress Leuven 1989*, 67-90. Leuven: University Press. (BETL XCIV.)
- Feinberg, J S. 1991. "Theodicy." *CEDT*, 505-507.
- Fretheim, T E 1994. "The Book of Genesis: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." *NIB*, 321-674.
- Gilmore, D D (ed.) 1987. *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*. A Special Publication of the American Anthropological Association. Number 22. Washington: American Anthropology Association.
- Goldingay, J 1981. *Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation*. Leicester: IVP.
- Gottwald, N K 1979. *The Tribes of Yahweh*. London: SCM.
- Gowan, D E 1994. *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Grisanti, M A 1997. אדמו. *NIDOTE* Vol 1, 265-275.
- 1997. בוא. *NIDOTE* Vol 1, 615-618.
- Grudem, W 1994. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Hartley, J F 1992. "Leviticus," *WBC*. Dallas: Word.
- Hogehaven, J 1987. *Problems and Prospects of Old Testament Theology*. Sheffield: JSOT.
- Houtman, C 2000. *Exodus*, vol. 3 (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament). Leuven: Peeters.
- Huey, Jr. F B 1993. *Jeremiah, Lamentations* (NAC). Nashville: Broadman Press.
- Hutton, R R 1994. *Charisma and Authority in Israelite Society*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

- Janzen, W 1992. "Land." *ABD* Vol 4, 143-150.
- Kaiser, Jr, W C 1987. *Towards Rediscovering the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Keown, G L, Scalise, P J, and Smothers, T G 1995. *Jeremiah 26-52* (WBC). Dallas: Word.
- Kidner, D 1967. *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC). London: Tyndale.
- Kinoti, G 1994. *Hope for Africa and what the Church can do*. Nairobi: Africa Institute for Scientific Research and Development.
- Knoppers, G N 2000. "Deuteronomistic History." *EDB*, 341-342.
- Knoppers, G N & McConville, J G (eds.) 2000. *Reconstructing Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*, Sources for Biblical Theological Study Vol 8. Indiana: Eisenbrauns.
- Kritzinger, JJ, Meiring, P G, and Saayman, W A 1994. *On Being Witnesses*. Halfway House: Orion.
- Laniak, T S 1998. *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther* (SBL Dissertation Series). Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Levine, B A 1989. *Leviticus* (The JPS Torah Commentary). Philadelphia: JPS.
- Long, V P (ed.) 1999. *Israel's Past in Present Research: Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography*. Indiana: Eisenbrauns.
- Lund, J A 1997. אֲמֹר. *NIDOTE* Vol 1, 443-449.
- March, W E 1994. *Israel and the Politics of Land: A Theological Case Study*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Marten, E A & Thomson, A 1997. שִׁיר. *NIDOTE* Vol 4, 58.
- Mays, J L; Peterson, D L & Richards, K H (eds) 1995. *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Mbiti, J S 1989. *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Heinemann Education Publishers.
- McKenzie, S L 1992. "Deuteronomistic History." *ABD* Vol 2, 160-168.
- McKenzie, S L & Graham, M P 1998. *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Mendenhall, G E & Harion, G A 1992. "Covenant." *ADB* Vol 1, 1179-1202.
- Meyer, F B 1978. *A Devotional Commentary on Exodus*. Grand Rapids: Kregel.
- Milgrom, J 1989. *Numbers* (The JPS Torah Commentary). Philadelphia: JPS.
- 1992. "Priestly ('P') Source." *ADB* Vol 5, 454-461.
- Moorey, P R S 1991. *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Murphy, R E 1992. "Wisdom in the Old Testament." *ABD* Vol 6, 920-931.
- Noordt, E 2001. The Debate Between Low and High Chronology in the Archaeology of Palestine. Paper presented at the Post Graduate Old Testament Seminar at the University of Stellenbosch, March 2001
- Noth, M 1943. ET 1981. *The Deuteronomistic History*. Sheffield: University of Sheffield.
- 1959. ET 1962. *Exodus: A Commentary* (OTL). London: SCM.
- 1965. *Leviticus* (OTL). London: SCM.

- Orr, D 2001. "A Million Low-Caste Hindus to Convert to Bhuddism (sic). *The Irish Times on the Web*, *ireland.com*, Thursday, November 1.
- Ottosson, M 1974. אֶרֶץ. *TDOT* Vol 1, 388-406.
- Paul, M J 1990. "King Josiah's Renewal of the Covenant (2 Kings 22-23)," in Brekelmans, C & Lust, J (eds), *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies: Papers Read at the XIIIth IOSOT Congress Leuven 1989*, 67-90. Leuven: University Press. (BETL XCIV.)
- Peckham, B 1993. *The Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (HSM 35). Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- 1993. *History and Prophecy*. New York: Doubleday.
- Petersen, D L 1995. "The Formation of the Pentateuch," in Mays, J L, Petersen, D L, and Richards, K H (eds.), *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future*. Edinburg: T & T Clark.
- Plöger, J G 1974. אֶרֶץ. *TDOT* Vol 1, 88-98.
- Rayburn, R S 1991. "Covenant," *CEDT*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 119-122.
- Rendtorff R 1986. *The Old Testament: An Introduction*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- 1996. "The 'Yahwist' as Theologian? The Dilemma of Pentateuchal Criticism," in Rogerson J W (ed.), *The Pentateuch: A Sheffield Reader*, 15-23. Sheffield: Academic Press.
- Rogerson, J W & Davies, P R 1989. *The Old Testament World*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Rogerson, J W (ed) 1983. *Beginning Old Testament Study*. London: SPCK.
- Ross, A P 1997. "Exile." *NIDOTE* Vol 4, 595-601.
- Sarna, N 1989. *Genesis* (The JPS Torah Commentary). Philadelphia: JPS.
- 1991. *Exodus* (The JPS Torah Commentary). Philadelphia: JPS.
- Schmid, H H 1996. "In Search of New Approaches in Pentateuchal Research," in Rogerson J W (ed), *The Pentateuch: A Sheffield Reader*, 24-32. Sheffield: Academic Press.
- 1997. אֶרֶץ and אֶרֶץ. *TLOT* Vol 1, 172-179.
- Scott, W 1980. *Bring Forth Justice*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Shank H (ed.) 1999. *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*. rev. & expanded. Washington: Biblical Archaeology Society.
- Thomson, J G S S & Elwell, W A 1991. "Spiritual Gifts." *EDT*, 482-484.
- Thomson, J A 1980. *The Book of Jeremiah* (NICOT). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Tigay, J H 1996. *Deuteronomy* (The JPS Torah Commentary). Philadelphia: JPS.
- Time*, May 1, 2000, 33-37.
- Vervenne, M 1990. "The 'P' Tradition in the Pentateuch: Document and/or Redaction? The 'Sea Narrative' (Ex 13,17-14,31) as a Test Case," in Brekelmans, C & Lust, J (eds), *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies: Papers Read at the XIIIth IOSOT Congress Leuven 1989*, 67-90. Leuven: University Press. (BETL XCIV.)
- Van Seters, J 1983. *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical Historiography*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- 1998. "The Pentateuch," in McKenzie, S L & Graham, M P (eds.), *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Von Rad, G (1956) 1961. *Genesis: A Commentary* (OTL). London: SCM.
- 1962 & 1965. Stalker, D M G (trs). *Old Testament Theology I & II*. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers. Von Rad's OT Theology I & II appeared in German in 1957 and 1960 respectively.
- 1966. *Deuteronomy*. London: SCM.
- 1965. Dicken, E W T (trs.). "The Promised Land and Yahweh's Land in the Hexateuch," in Von Rad, G (ed.), *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*. Edinburgh/London: Oliver and Boyd, 79-93.
- 1966. *Deuteronomy*. London: SCM.
- Weaver, T (reporter) & Weinberg P (photographer) 2001. Going back to their roots. *Mail & Guardian* (South African ed), Vol 17, No 35, 31 August – 6 September, 14.
- Weinfeld, M 1993. *The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by Israelites*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wenham, G J 1987. *Genesis 1 – 15* (WBC). Waco, Texas: Word.
- Wellhausen, J (1885) 1994. *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*. Atlanta: Scholars Press (first published 1878 in German, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*. Berlin: De Gruyter).
- Westenholz, J G 1998. *Sacred Bounty Sacred Land: The Seven Species of the Land of Israel*. Jerusalem: Bible Land Museum Jerusalem.
- Willett, T W 1992. "Wisdom of Ben-Sira." *ABD* Vol 6, 931-945.
- Wilson, G H 1997. יֵשׁוּעַ. *NIDOTE* Vol 2, 550-551.
- Wolff, H W 1982. "The Kerygma of the Deuteronomistic History," in Brueggemann, W & Wolff, H W (eds.), *The Vitality of the Old Testament Traditions*. Atlanta: John Knox.
- Wright, C H J 1983. *Living as the People of God: The Relevance of the Old Testament Ethics*. Leicester: IVP.
- 1991. *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- 1992. "Jubilee, Year of." *ABD* Vol 3, 1025-1030.
- 1997. יָרֵךְ. *NIDOTE* Vol 1, 518-524.
- Wright, D P 1992. "Holiness." *ABD* Vol 3, 237-249.
- Youngblood, R 1995. "Genesis," *The Compact NIV Study Bible*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.